Pivot constructions as everyday conversational phenomena within a cross-linguistic perspective: An introduction

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Abstract

This special issue collects six articles (including this introduction) about a family of grammatical constructions in everyday talk-in-interaction, syntactic pivot constructions, as they appear within five different languages: Estonian, Finnish, French, German (Siebenbürger Sächsisch variety) and Swedish – or six, as pivot utterances from English talk are often used as comparative data. In this introduction, we will try to sketch the empirical background to the collected studies as it has emerged during the last decade. We will also discuss some central issues regarding the analysis of pivots as participants’ methods to engage in communicative projects in talk, as well as the theoretical relevance of pivots for a grammar of conversational language. First we will define the phenomenon of syntactic pivots and present some basic conceptual tools for the discussions. After the introduction follows an overview of the basic resources and methods of pivot construction (apart from formal syntax), such as prosody, lexis, incrementation, and projection, based on naturally occurring pivot utterances drawn from different languages. The introduction ends with a discussion of the dependence of pivots on other grammatical construction methods within specific languages, as well as the relation between the use of pivots and activity types.

Keywords: Pivot construction; Cross language perspective; Dialogical grammar; Conversation analysis; Incremental turn construction

1. Pivot utterances: definitions and examples

As a point of departure, we would like to emphasize that pivot utterances are not deviant phenomena for participants in talk, but frequent products of conversational interaction. The following example from Walker (2007:2219, see also Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher, 2013) illustrates the phenomenon¹:

(1) Walker (2007:2219). Two women, L(ottie) and E(mma) have been about buying a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner.

1. L: so I went down there and got a- (.) Rancho a fresh one
2. (0.6)
3. E: oh that’s what I’d like to have is a fresh one

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¹ For another introductory example, see Norén (2013).
Here the whole pivot utterance is marked in **boldface**, while (what we will call) the pivot (segment) itself is shaded. What Emma does in line 3 is to provide what seems to become a syntactically coherent response of the type Pro + Cop^2 + NP, where the NP is a rather heavy complex construct (**what I'd like to have**). After this, nothing more is obligatorily syntactically projected (although the speaker could of course have continued with additional complements, such as *today or for dinner*). However, Emma does not stop here; she continues, without any prosodic break, with another Cop + NP construct, which has not been syntactically projected and does not fit the whole preceding utterance according to normative grammar. What she does is to take the final complex NP of the prior construction as the subject of the added-on verb phrase (VP). This creates a so-called pivot utterance, which begins with one segment (**that's what I'd like to have**; we call this part first segment), and ends in another segment (**what I'd like to have is a fresh one**; called second segment). These two segments overlap and share a part (**what I'd like to have**) that is used as a pivotal segment in the construct, and is therefore called the ‘pivot’; it is as if the production of the whole utterance (line 3) turns around this piece (cf. the German term *Drehsatz*). We will call the part that precedes the pivot (here: that’s pre-pivot, and the part following the pivot (here: is a fresh one) post-pivot. The first segment of the whole resulting construct (the pivot utterance) is, according to normative grammar, syntactically inconsistent with the post-pivot; in this case, there are two finite verbs that share an NP which is simultaneously a predicate phrase in the first segment and the subject of the second segment. The whole construct would therefore not be considered permissible in most written texts.

The term pivot utterance (*or pivot construction*) for this phenomenon has been adopted in recent years (cf. Scheutz, 2005; Betz, 2008), drawing on the use of the term ‘pivot’ in conversation-analytic approaches to similar phenomena (Schegloff, 1979; Walker, 2007). The traditional term in linguistics for these utterance types has been apo-koinou (Scheutz, 1992; Norén, 2007), or sometimes even anacoluthon (Enkvist, 1988), although the latter term covers a wider variety of phenomena that deviates from normative grammar.

Literate writing practices (with some interesting exceptions, see Norén, 2007:24) have worked to avoid pivot constructions. Normative grammars have usually ignored them and even tried to eradicate them from actual usage. Yet, they survive and occur quite often in imromptu speech. They do not deviate from participants’ intuitive norms for conversational language. Speakers and listeners alike almost never notice a pivot utterance as remarkable in natural languaging, and repairs of syntactic pivot utterances have not been reported in systematic corpus-based studies such as Scheutz (1992, 2005), Norén (2007) or Betz (2008). Despite the fact that they occur so naturally and frequently, only comparatively few linguists have worked on pivot constructions. By contrast, the papers of this journal issue argue that pivot utterances and constructions emerge naturally from resources already existing in natural interactional languaging, and that they are solutions to speaker’s communicative projects in interaction,^3^ and therefore highly relevant research objects for linguists and conversation analysts.

Despite the fact that pivot utterances are typical conversational phenomena, different languages can provide divergent structural conditions for their occurrence. There are clearly different kinds of pivot utterances, and it is a moot issue if we can demarcate precisely which utterances are pivot utterances and which utterances are merely pivot-like in some aspects. Some utterance types seem to have become conventionalized as types of pivot constructions (in a construction-grammar sense), while others are probably results of more general conversational practices. These are issues that we will treat in this introduction, and the papers of this special issue address some of these issues.

Our grammatical approach is one of on-line syntax (e.g. Auer, 2005, 2009) of real utterances in actual languaging (Linell, forthcoming). It also shares some features with Construction Grammar ("CxG", e.g. Fried and Östman, 2005), although we would argue that CxG in general suffers from an interactional deficit. One terminological usage borrowed from CxG is the distinction between construction (type in language) and construct (part of a specific utterance in languaging). Furthermore, we agree with CxG that utterances are not derived from underlying (deep) structures.

2. The role of prosody

If a construct, e.g. a putative pivot utterance, is to form a consistent close-knit grammatical construction, Walker (2007) argues that there should be no prosodic breaks or dips between the pivot and its preceding pre-pivot or its following post-pivot. For example, line 3 in (1) is prosodically continuous. However, Walker assigns more importance to this particular phonetic aspect than most other researchers do. In part, this was as a consequence of the overall design of Walker’s overall study, which dealt with specific phonetic phenomena in English conversation that are interactionally relevant, rather than with pivots as grammatical constructions in talk in general. Other studies, such as Norén (2007) and Betz (2008), have demonstrated that pivot utterances have their socio-historical provenance in incrementally produced turns,

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^2^ Demonstrative pronoun *that* and Copula verb *is*.

^3^ There is now a growing body of research on pivot utterances, most of which has been inspired by Conversation Analysis and on-line syntax (Auer, 2005, 2009). Ample references to this literature will be made in the papers of this issue.
or the moment-by-moment production of turn-constructional units (TCUs). Pivot constructions exploit resources that occur independently of pivots within the language, such as final short increments. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that pivot utterances (or pivot-like utterances) are produced incrementally, piece-by-piece, in concrete situated interaction (see section 4). Often, utterances that end up with a syntactic pivot-like structure are produced with micro-pauses or prosodic dips either before or after the pivot (or at both places). Consider, for example, extract (2) from Swedish:

(2) Overheard by PL and noted down on the spot during a telephone conversation: A is asking B if she is available on the phone some night later in the week. B answers:

1. B: ja e hemma? (. ) äminstone vid halvåttatiden e ja hemma. 
   I am home ( . ) at least at half-past-seven-ish am I home

Here, the speaker makes a micro-pause after (what later becomes and might be seen as) a pre-pivot. However, the prosody on hemma (‘at home’) (in this first segment) projects a continuation, and the pre-pivot is probably not a pragmatically complete answer (although we do not know the exact formulation of A’s question).

Other examples of pivot-like constructions with internal prosodic boundaries are some of the French double-dislocation utterances discussed by Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher, 2013; cf. also Horlacher and Pekarek Doehler, forthcoming). So called dislocated phrases (to be further discussed below) are, by definition, not syntactically integrated with the inner finite clause, which provides a grammatical condition for a prosodic segmentation of the utterance. Pivot utterances may also be produced with an intonational terminal at either boundary around the pivot. Some of these utterances can be interpreted as a sequence of independent TCUs. (This interpretation is potentially available also for extract (2).) What this seems to show is that there is no sharp boundary between pivot utterances and other pivot-like utterances. Several of the contributions to this journal issue therefore work with definitions of ‘pivot utterances’ that are more liberal than that of Walker (op. cit.) on the issue of prosodic design.

3. Lexico-grammatical types

Pivot utterances do not form one single clear-cut construction (Norén, op.cit.). Instead, we have possibly a family of related constructs, among which some are more sedimented as construction types than others. One subfamily consists of so-called mirror-image constructions (Franck, 1985; Scheutz, 2005) (or ‘symmetric constructions’; Lindström, this volume), typically with light pre- and post-pivots, where the pre- and post-pivot segments are lexically identical or almost identical, but produced with different word order (as in a mirror reflection), as in (2), and (3):

(3) (Scheutz, 2005:105)

1. A: des is was furchtbar is des
   that is something awful is that
   that is awful indeed

In some languages, such as Swedish and German, declarative sentences with fronted non-subjects are produced with inverted word order. (Extract (3) is not an example of this, since here the initial unit is the subject.) The initial positioning of non-subjects results in pivot utterances where the pre- and post-pivots are constructed with identical word order, as in (4):

(4) From a TV program about film director Ingmar Bergman’s house-keeper; here she tells about how dinner should be served in the late afternoon.

1. A: då kom han ju ner då klockan sex (. ) prick kom han ner.
   then came he PRT down then o’clock six sharp came he down
   then he came down at six (. ) sharp he came down

In English, the construction type with identical (straight) word order in both pre- and post-pivots seems to be the most common variant, but true mirror image constructions have been reported, as in example (1). In true mirror-image constructions like (1–3) and in variants of these (like 4), the pre-pivot and the post-pivot are identical, except for the regular change of word order. But the post-pivot arguably has a confirming function in these cases, and is therefore hardly superfluous (Norén, op.cit.). Usually, the pivot itself is comparatively heavy. In (4) the add-on of prick (‘sharp’) certainly makes the time announcement in the pivot more precise, but the delay of this expansion (after a micro-pause) may have encouraged the speaker to provide a post-pivotal continuation.
In some mirror-image cases, post-pivots change the epistemic function of the utterance, as in (5):

(5) Overheard and noted down by PL: In the early morning A is looking out from the window into the street below:
1. A: de e nog kaljt ute.
   it's probably cold outside
2. B: (looks at the thermometer)
3. B: de e minus en e de bara.
   it is minus one it only

Here de e minus en (‘it is minus one’) is just a factual report, which, however, can be heard as concurring with A’s turn in line 1. However, the addition of the post-pivot changes the whole utterance into an assessment that opposes, or at least mitigates, this agreement.

In other cases, as in (6), the post-pivot adds something more about the local topic. Such a construction has been called Janus construction (Norén, 2007; Bockgård and Norén, 2011), alluding to the Greek god with two faces – one facing backwards and one facing forwards. The pivot faces the pre- and post-pivots (the utterance beginning and end, respectively) in different ways. The pivot utterance thus becomes (more) asymmetrical in Lindström’s (this volume) terminology. Apart from being an illustrative representation of dialogical utterance production in general, this construction variant of pivot utterances often contributes to a perspective shift during the utterance, which is sometimes subtle, and sometimes more salient (see Norén, 2013, for more about perspective shifts in pivot utterances with Janus construction). Some researchers would regard these as more “full-blown” pivot constructions than the mirror-image ones.

In the following example, drawn from a telling about how firewood was transported in the old days across the ice of a frozen lake, there is a shift in the way an ice yacht is presented – from ‘a carrier of firewood’, into ‘a vehicle on which a sledge is attached behind’.

(6) (Bockgård and Norén, 2011:119). Drawn from a Swedish dialect interview, recorded in 1972. S is the interviewed spokesperson, telling how they transported firewood in the old days.
1. S: då lasta vi dit de på isjakten >så hade vi
   then load-PRET we there it on ice-yacht-DEF so had we
   then we loaded it on the ice yacht we had
2. en sånn där fyrstaka†tjälke såm di kalle förr<.
   one those there fyrstaka-sledge that they called formerly
   one of those fyrstaka sledges as they called them formerly

The segment på isjakten ‘on the ice yacht’ is used as the pivot on which the shift is made. The Swedish particle så (literally ‘so’), here constructs på isjakten as an initial place adverbial within a simple clause, and the idiomatic English translation would be to exclude the particle, ‘on the ice yacht we had…’. The speaker speeds up on the post-pivot segment, but this speeding up is not heard as a marking of a syntactic boundary. Instead, på isjakten is constructed as the syntactic (adverbial) base for the continuing turn, hence the pivot construction.

In (7), the speaker uses the pivot for a more radical change from a question to a candidate answer in the same utterance (also see Walker, 2004; Hakulinen et al., 2004, Betz, 2008 for similar examples in English, Finnish and German, respectively).

(7) Overheard and noted down by PL during a seminar session at a university campus; A, who acted as seminar chair, says after closing the seminar proper:
1. A: e de nära arrangement för lunchen har vi väl inte va?
   are there any arrangements for lunch have we PRT not PRT
   are there any arrangements for lunch haven’t we, right

Speaker A asks if there are any plans for a common lunch between seminar sessions, but changes the open interrogative yes/no construction into a declarative question (with a fronted object), the latter being tilted towards a negative answer.
The next example (8) shows a pivot utterance with a Janus construction from German:

(8)  (Schuecht, 2005:110)
1. A:  **da is die fensterkurbel, (. ) hab=i abgedreht gehabt.**
    there is the window handle have I broken-off had
    *there is the window handle I have broken off*

This construction is similar to (1); it contains a light pre-pivot, and the post-pivot is also relatively light, but it includes some new lexical material and provides new information about the pivot. Compare with the example in (9), showing a frequent construction in English spoken language, called a *Presentational-Predicational Cleft*, claimed to belong to a wider category of *Cleft Apo Koinous* by Lambrecht and Ross-Hagebaum (2006):

(9)  (Lambrecht and Ross-Hagebaum, 2006:6)
1. A:  **there's about thirty dolphins have stranded themselves on the beach.**

This construction is reported to have the discourse function of introducing discourse referents that are new to the listener, where the initial light construction *there's* is presenting the referent, and where the post-pivot segment reports something about it without using a relative construction (for similar cases in Swedish, see Norén, 2007:107; Forsskåhl, 2008:139f).

4. The emergence of apo-koinou from other practices

Pivot utterances tend to make use of grammatical and lexical resources that also occur frequently in other contexts. A relatively clear example of this is the structures that result from using both pre- and postdislocated NP:s in the same French utterances.4 Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher (2013) provides many examples, including the following (which is discussed in a more extensive context by these authors):

(10) (Pekarek-Doehler and Horlacher, this issue) A young woman L recounts her past experiences as a bilingual, and is here talking about some specific aspects.
1. L:  **mes: amours et tout ça c'était en français mes amitiés**
    my love-stories and all that they-were in French my friendships
    *my love-stories and all that they were in French my friendships*

If we apply a pivot analysis to this type of utterance, the pivot would consist of a full clause, while the pre- and post-pivots are “dislocated” noun phrases. The latter two segments thus exemplify two constructions, *prelocations* and *postlocations*, that usually occur independently of each other in French. When they co-occur, as here, they may be said to form a pivot utterance. The syntactic “dislocation” outside of the main clause may be said to be compensated for by their prosodic integration (though such an integration is not always present). Both referential phrases (*mes amours et tout ça* and *mes amitiés*) are related (co-)referentially to *c* in *c'était* of the main clause, but as the authors point out, it is somewhat unclear what their mutual relation is. Clearly, they are not the same in terms of lexical content; so, do they refer to the same relations and events, or do the referents of the post-pivot replace those of the pre-pivot, or is the post-pivot a new item on a list (of love-stories, friendships, etc.)? In any case, the difference between them confirms the functional potential of post-pivots to respecify pre-pivots (see section 3).

The paper by Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher (2013) thus look at (‘dislocated’) NPs as pre- and post-pivot constituents surrounding an intermediate pivot consisting of a clause. In another recent paper, Horlacher and Pekarek Doehler (forthcoming) discuss another, and closely related, type of pivot-like construction, in which an NP pivot appears between two clausal pre- and post-pivots.5 The latter two can be identical or almost identical, creating a mirror-image pivot construct, in (11) with a slightly expanded post-pivot, but they can also be different (see several examples in their paper):

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4 The traditional terms within normative grammar are *left dislocation* and *right dislocation*, but we use terms with pre- and post- instead, as left and right portray things in spatially rather than temporally associated terms. One may also use terms like *initial* vs. *final peripheries*. For some discussion, see Linell (forthcoming) and Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher (2013).

5 Compare also the reversed variants of double-dislocations in Swedish discussed by Norén (2007:84ff), where the PC begins with a postlocation, which is then turned into a prelocation during the pivotal shift.
Horlacher and Pekarek Doehler (forthcoming) (and also Pekarek Doehler, 2011) look upon ‘pivoting’ (French: pivotage) as an emergent, incremental process, very much in line with the approach adopted in this introduction and several of the papers in this issue.

There are many other examples of pre- and post-pivots that exploit independently occurring resources in languages. The post-pivot, especially, is often a device that can be used in other turn constructions. Examples (12–14) and (19) present a common post-positioned phrase with verbs referring to thoughts, feelings or utterances (verba cogitandi, sentiendi et dicendi):

(12) (Bockgård and Norén, 2011:121). Drawn from a Swedish dialect interview, recorded in 1959. The spokesperson tells the interviewer about the number of acres of farmland that belonged to the farms in the local area.

1. I: =5nå:..hh ja::g
   no .hh yes
2. S: äkarn de e sextifyra tunnamm, (.) >tror ja de e< på Hållgarn,
   the field there is sixtyfour acres think I it is on Hållgarn
   and Gunnar's .hh there's .hh (how ) it is fiftytwo
   and Gunnar's .hh there's .hh it's fiftytwo

(13) (Lambrecht and Ross-Hagebaum, 2006:13) The full stops “..” indicates a short pause or hesitation.

1. A: I went to a conference in ..BOSTON I guess it was.

In (12) and (13) the post-pivots are constructed with the verbs think’ and ‘guess’, which are used to modify and shift stance (Norén, 2013) towards a preceding factual report. In (14), the post-pivot is constructed with the verb ‘say’, that does something rather different:

(14) (Norén, 2007:125). From a coffee conversation in a private home between four senior women (65–75 years). Speaker B initiates a second story following a previous story about an old cat:

1. B: =men du: de va en som hade en blomsteraffär
   but you it was one that had a flower-store
   but y'know there was one that had a flower store
3. som hade en katt där .hh nånstans på Storbacken då (.)
   that had a cat there .hh somewhere on Large-Hill then
   that had a cat there .hh somewhere on Large Hill then
3. >åsså sa ja hur< gammal e den här katten >sa [ja<.]
   and-then said I how old is this here cat said I
   and then I said how old is this cat I said
4. A: [ ja ]
   yes

Here, the light increment with a verbum dicendi clause sa ja (‘said I’) un-quotes the prior direct self-quotation (see Betz, 2013, for similar German examples).

In the following extract (15), the speaker stops in the middle of a TCU and pauses (0.6), hesitating as if searching for a name, and then resumes the turn with the name of a place, which is immediately extended with a construction that uses the verb heter (heter re ‘is called’).

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6 ‘Fade away’ is a reflexive verb, s’effacer, beginning with a reflexive pronoun, s(e), in French.
(15) (Norén, 2007:240) Talk in an everyday setting between four senior women, having coffee. Speaker D initiates a telling about a trip she went on the week before.

1. D: .hh jäj ja var eh:: d- förre lördaN åkte ja
.hh yes I was eh:: d- last Saturday went I
.hh yes I was eh:: d- last Saturday I went

2. ner till e*h:* (0.6) Långa 'Högsby heter e==
down to eh: (0.6) Långa Högsby named it
down to eh: (0.6) Långa Högsby is it called

3. >asså nere vi Storösund i<
that is down at Storösund

The post-pivot extension meta-comments on the preceding name choice and confirms it as the right one. The ‘heter’-construction is a rather common add-on in Swedish which sometimes contributes to a pivot utterance, as in (15) (also known as ‘het’-konstruktion, Bjerre, 1935; Norén, 2007:240; Bockgård and Norén, 2011). This has also been reported for English (Lambrecht and Ross-Hagebaum, 2008:13). Actually, Bjerre (1935) argues that the Swedish ‘het’-construction was originally an import from German, but we have no recent reports on the use of the construction in modern spoken German. This add-on is related in function to the stance-shifting post-pivot in (12–14), but works rather to confirm or emphasize the correct linguistic choice.

A functionally similar but formally different construction variant in Swedish, as compared to (15), uses the auxiliary verb form gör (‘do/does’) in combination with a pronominal element, e.g. dom/jag/han/hon/de (‘they/lhe/she/it’) as a final incremental add-on. In the following extract (16), the client at a social welfare office reports trouble regarding an offer of an apartment. After completing his turn in line 3, and after receiving an acknowledgement from the interviewer, he adds an incremental comment to his turn in the shape of a ‘gör + Pro’ construction: gör de ju (‘does it yknow’).

(16) [DB:217] Interview between a female researcher (R) and a male client (C) at a social welfare office.

1. C: jo:? jo men sen [＞tar-e JU＜ (. ) TAR JU TI:D I ALLA]=
PRT PRT but then takes-it y’know takes y’now time in any
yes yes but then it takes y’know takes y’now time any

2. R: [ me e:rbjudande på lägenhet ]
with offer on apartment

3. C: =↑FALL innnan ja fär nāst↑a erbjudande.=
case before I get next offer

4. R: =a::a,
yes
(.)

5. C: *gör de ju*.
does it y’know

Here, the increment in line 5 does not quite work as a typical post-pivot (hence the absence of grey shading of a pivot). The increment rather confirms the whole preceding segment.7 As indicated in the transcript, what becomes the pivot is not only the NP but the VP in which the NP is the indirect object. Lindström and Karlsson (2005:115) refer to these constructions as

7 Increments may relate to entire clauses in non-pivot utterances. Consider the following Swedish example (also without grey shading of a pivot):

(17) Noted down by PL: A is walking towards a tram stop. From a distance he sees a tram approaching, but cannot discern its line number:

1. A: de e antingen en tvåa eller en fyra. (. ) ja tror de e en fyra.
it is either a number two or a number four I think it is a number four

2. (walks for another 20 seconds, comes closer to the stop)

3. de e en fyra. (. ) ser ja nu.
it is a number four see I now (‘can I see now’)

Here, the first clause in line 3 de e en fyra (‘it is a number four’) expresses certainty by means of an emphatic response construction (with emphatic stress on the copula verb; also see Stivers, 2005). Despite this, the speaker chooses, after a micro-pause, to supply his grounds for certainty with an incremental construction ser ja nu (‘see I now’) with a transitive verb of perception (‘see’) taking the whole of the preceding clause (de e en fyra) as its object.
belonging to a wider category of ‘appended finite doublings’. In an earlier draft of the same paper they referred to these add-ons as ‘false pivots’ (Lindström and Karlsson, 2003:5), a term that indicates the resemblance to (and deviation from) pivot constructions.

Apart from post-pivots that make use of common turn add-ons such as I believe, I guess, I feel, (it) does (Sw. gör de) etc., or more generally used turn construction methods such as increments, two speakers may also produce pivot utterances together, ending up with co-constructed units. In extract (18), a possibly co-constructed pivot utterance appears during a lesson in an aviation school. The student and the teacher are discussing strange nose positions that have to be corrected when flying an aeroplane. The student’s utterance can be seen as a try-marked summary of what she has learnt so far.

(18) (Melander, 2009:108) From a lesson in an aviation school: S(tudent) and T(eacher). (Original drawings of the accompanying gestures by Melander have been omitted here).
1. S: de e bara typ asså om vi ligger s-
it is only like PRT if we lying s-it’s only like so if we are lying
2. [eller [liksom står väldit [lägt.
or like standing terribly low
or like are standing terribly low
3. T: [ a, [ olika- olika
yeah different different
4. konstiga [nossalagen helt enkelt “e de”
strange- nose-positions quite- simply is it
strange nose positions quite simply it is
5. S: [ ((nodding)) øa=okejº
yes okay

Here, the student’s utterance is formally a declarative, which, however, could be heard as a question, an interpretation that is compatible with the teacher’s response. Speaker S’s utterance begins with a light introduction de e (‘it’s’), followed by some vaguifying particles (bara typ asså) and a rather long predicate expression, formally a subordinate if-clause. The teacher then reformulates this as a noun phrase followed by a sentence adverbial olika konstiga noslägen helt enkelt (‘different strange nose positions quite simply’). He then adds (silently) a completer e de (‘is it’), which in effect mirrors the student’s turn-initial de e. Even if all this is not a typical pivot utterance, one might argue that the teacher makes a retraction and inserts an alternative to the student’s main constituent. These two heavy constituents, the student’s and the teacher’s, could be seen as two alternative pivots (both shadowed above), retro-constructed through the add-on of e de. The whole sequence could therefore be seen as a co-constructed pivot utterance using mirror-image construction. In any case, the final e de is a possible increment, irrespective of any interpretation as a post-pivot. The heavy constituents forming the possible pivots might increase the probability of the teacher’s add-on. In addition, he may wish to disambiguate or confirm his characterization retroactively.

The following example (19) is a more straight-forward collaborative turn construction, where two girls in their twenties talk about a mutual friend and her mother’s skills at sewing her clothes.

(19) (Norén, 2007:96) Arranged conversation between two girls in their twenties, within a Swedish research project on dialects (recorded in 1968 by Bengt Nordberg, Uppsala University).
1. A: [#>nå men gul: d# e’re hennes mamm’ a som (#affect laden))
no but god is it her mom that
oh god is it her mom that
2. syr [allting.]
sews everything
3. B: [ ja [allting (.)] allting.
yes everything everyting
4. (0.9)
5. B: >syr. hennes mamma<.
sews her mom
The first segment in the pivot construction is produced by speaker A (e’re hennes mamma som syr allting (‘is it her mom that sews everything’). The last word in A’s turn, allting (‘everything’), is then repeated twice by speaker B in line 3, and the second repetition is marked with a final prosodic drop. After a pause of almost a second (line 4), B extends her repetition with a verb-initiated increment, syr hennes mamma (‘sews her mom’), thereby ending up with the second segment in the pivot construction, allting syr hennes mamma (‘everything sews her mom’). So in this sequence, the pivot utterance is produced using both collaborative and incremental turn construction practices, and it serves well as an example of how pivot utterances may be produced using many construction processes at the same time.

As a final example of the structural ambiguities often involved in the analysis of utterance constructions in real talk-in-interaction, consider example (20):

(20) (Lindström, 2012) From an arranged discussion between high-school students, with a moderator present, on different music styles. The moderator has just asked one of the students, A(nna), why she does not like a particular piece.

1. A: nā

ja tycker de e: () nāe

no I think it is () well

2. (0.2)

3. A: ”för mjäkt tycker ja”

too soft I think

In line 1 Anna begins, after a nā (‘no’, which could be a conventional way of beginning a subjective, and somewhat downplayed, evaluation), with ja tycker (‘I think’). The construction ja tycker is a very common way of displaying an epistemic attitude in Swedish, a kind of felt opinion, which projects, especially in the communicative activity type in question (which had the evaluation of different music styles as its explicitly stated purpose), an upcoming evaluation. However, in (20) this evaluation gets delayed by lengthening, a micro-pause, a particle and another, slightly longer pause (line 2). In line 3 comes the evaluation för mjäkt (‘too soft’), immediately followed by a comment clause with the same verb tycker as before. Despite the hesitations and perturbations, it is possible to analyse the utterance whole as a pivot-like utterance. The pivot would then be för mjäkt, whereas one may regard the pre-pivot as beginning already with ja tycker or with de e: In the former analysis, we are faced with a mirror image construction. This interpretation recalls Betz’s (this volume) quote-unquote analysis of some pivot utterances. Note, however, that the lexically identical pre- and post-pivots do other interactional jobs too, the former projecting an upcoming evaluation (a response to the moderator’s request), while the latter may be seen as a modifying comment, retroactively mitigating the assessment of the pivot segment.

Admittedly, several of the examples (11–20) are not prototypical pivot utterances, let alone pivot constructions. But we could still claim that they are definitely related, belonging, as it were, to a spectrum of pivot-like utterance types. These are local constructions resulting from the patching together (Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher, in this issue) of linguistic resources, many of which are used in other constructions too. Hopper (2011) provides a similar interactional account of sluicing, i.e. patched-up utterances like She said okay, I’ll stay another year, but, I don’t know why (here the bold-faced segment is parasitic on the previous clause, but similar pieces can be used in other ways in English).

5. Incrementation and projection

By way of an interim summary, pivot constructions are a naturally occurring phenomenon in conversation, and largely emergent from other resources. As has been demonstrated in Auer’s (2005, 2009) work on on-line syntax (see also e.g. Imo (2011), Günthner (2011), Linell (forthcoming) and others), utterance production works largely by incrementation; speakers proceed by adding new pieces, increments, to what has already been said, rather than by laying out whole utterances according to a pre-planned structure. The assumption of incrementation is legion in the theory of conversational interaction, at least since Schegloff (1996).

The chunks of which utterances are built are typically not mutually independent. Rather, they tend to have responsive relations backwards, and projective relations forward. The case of pivot utterances is interesting, because they involve internal and dynamic shifts of projections in the course of ongoing utterance production (Norén, 2007:142ff). Normally, a possible end of a construction is projected at the end of (what eventually becomes) the pivot. However, at the beginning (and later completion) of the post-pivot, projections are changed. A pivot construction is based on the syntactic (but not semantic-pragmatic) abandonment of the pre-pivot, i.e. the speaker leaves this behind, suspending its projections (substituting them by those of the pivot), but not cancelling its content, as in a repair. In this respect, the continuation is similar to a fresh start on a new TCU (or clause). Pivot constructions fulfil various important functions for the speaker, as we will see in the next section.
6. Pivot constructions as a family of constructs (CxG)

We have seen that pivot utterances are natural results of incremental production of utterances. Accordingly, they belong to the inventory of conversational practices that speakers have at their disposal. However, they do not seem to form one single, uniform grammatical construction. Rather, only some of them have become sedimented as conventionalized, grammatically (and prosodically?) specified constructions.

Irrespective of whether we look at pivot utterances as conventionalized constructions of their own or “merely” as conversational practices, we can regard them as methods that speakers use in building utterances and turns. These methods have two sides, which we may call formal and functional (pragmatic).

Traditionally, pivot utterances (apo-koinou) have most often been seen as formal methods of shifting syntactic constructions in mid-utterance or mid-turn. As noted, they were often seen as ungrammatical at that. More recent interactional-linguistic analyses have shown that they have important pragmatic functions as well. Before turning to these, we note, however, that the strategy of shifting syntactic construction, often using prosodies that project more to come after (what will become) the pre-pivot or pivot, serves to continue the same utterance without giving up the turn and speakership (cf. Schegloff, 1979; Kitzinger, 2000; Norén, 2003; Walker, 2004, 2007; Betz, 2008). This in itself is an important pragmatic function; rather than relinquishing the turn, thus risking that the other will develop the dialogue into directions that might make it more difficult for the speaker to achieve what s/he is about to say or do, the speaker simply goes on with more information or with modifying the epistemic status of what has already been said or alluded to (for example, by confirming it).

If, in this way, the speaker postpones the turn take-over by somebody else for a few more moments, s/he can use the discursive space thus acquired for carrying out an extra local communicative task (or project). Norén (2007, 2013) has demonstrated that the formal shift of syntax has a pragmatic counterpart; the perspective on the topic gets shifted or modified. (In Lindström’s (this volume) terminology, they may be redirecting.) In addition, Norén argues that pivot utterances may be methods for carrying out other projects; in addition to holding on to speakership, these include resuming a turn’s progressivity after heavy pivots (as in extract (2)), changing or modifying the action status (e.g. from a neutral question to a cautious assumption as in extract (7)) or changing the epistemic status of the utterance. In Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher’s (2013) terms, speakers can use post-pivots to proffer assessments of something already said, or for managing reference formulation, e.g. making a claim more (5) or less (12–14) precise. The post-pivot can be a metalinguistic comment on the correctness of reference or appropriacy of word choice in the preceding pivot (6, 15). Briefly put, speakers can use the post-pivot to express themselves a little bit more accurately, precisely or specifically than in the pre-pivot + pivot. As a particular case in point, Hennoste (2013) argues that at least some pivot utterances in Estonian can be seen as cases of self-repair, which is also reported from German (Schultz, 1992, 2005; Betz, 2008), Swedish (Norén, 2007), and Finnish (Hakulinen et al., 2004).

Finally, speakers may use constructions that resemble pivots in order to achieve similar local projects, such as confirming a preceding word or segment in the discourse and thereby upgrading its interactional importance at a specific sequential position in the talk (16, 19, 20). These, as most of the linguistic resources that are used when building pivot utterances, are general grammatical resources available to speakers. Light pre-pivots and post-pivots, for example, are common ways of initiating and ending pivot constructions but may be seen as conventionalized turn-entry and turn-exit devices (Lindström, this volume) with various pragmatic functions, not specific for pivot construction. This also applies to the French dislocated NPs (Pekarek-Doehler and Horlacher, in this issue; Horlacher and Pekarek Doehler, forthcoming).

7. Different languages provide different structural conditions

Particular languages may provide specific structural conditions that facilitate the production of pivot or pivot-like utterances. For example, the great variety of front-field-positioned constituents paired with the V2 word-order constraint in German and Swedish would seem to enable more pivot utterance types, compared to, for example, English. (On the German framing construction, see below.) In French, the possibility of double dislocations (which are pivot-like; cf. Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher, 2013, and Horlacher and Pekarek Doehler, forthcoming) resulting from the possibility of having both left and right dislocations is another case in point (extracts (10, 11)). In Welsh, the fact that the verb is often unspecified for gender and number may increase the range of possible pivot utterances.8

In German, the so-called framing construction (German: Klammerkonstruktion) also constitutes a condition of possibility. Let us look at a couple of German examples, in which this construction is involved:

---

8 Nigel Musk, personal communication (yet to be confirmed in detailed analysis of empirical data).
The German framing construction is typically something like: Subj Aux Advbl {Obj, Adj} V, with the finite auxiliary in second position and the final (main) verb constituting the right frame before which adverbials, objects and predicates are often placed. However, if the adverbial is heavy, an extra auxiliary plus subject are often inserted after it, as in (21, 22). In (21) the initial adverbial of the pre-pivot is also mirrored in the post-pivot, and the repeat untn im Haus is placed outside the frame (ausgeklammert). In (22), the post-pivot is considerably expanded. Also see Norén (2007) for similar post-pivot constructions after heavy pivot segments (described as progression resuming constructions).

Other languages may have similarities with German. For example, Hennoste (2013) provides several Estonian examples showing that an adverbial or a noun phrase may interrupt a construction consisting of a verb plus an object or a verb plus a non-finite verb form. This may lead to a recycling of the finite verb:

Here the pivot construction starts in line 2 with a light beginning containing the finite negation particle (ei) and a verb in the negative (võta ‘get’). Then the speaker hesitates (see the prolongation at the end of võta: before producing the following particle (nond) and an adverbial (nond klientidega ‘with these customers’ in the comitative case). After this, the negation phrase ei võta is recycled and only then comes the non-finite part ühendust (‘connection’) of the compound verb. Thus, the framing construction (compare the German examples (21, 22)) is interrupted or stalled by a rather heavy phrase, which elicits a recycling of the finite verb before the right brace. Hennoste’s Estonian data comprise several such cases, with heavy phrases, typically adverbials, in the pivot segments.

8. Relations to activity types

One issue that has not yet been sufficiently studied within the field is whether pivot constructions, as construction methods, are over- or under-represented in specific communicative genres or activity types. However, we might hypothesize, on the basis of preliminary observations, that there are differences between pivot utterances produced with a simple mirror image construction and a Janus construction in Swedish. The former seem to be especially prevalent as responses to questions in short exchanges. The latter are, by contrast, often first-positioned utterances (initiatives) or substantial responses in the information flow of on-line commentaries (TV weather forecasts, moving from one region to another, from one day to the next: live sports commentaries), accounts, arguments, and explanations. Look at (24), which is derived from a radio program on sexology: a psychologist is being interviewed on the topic of people losing their sexual
desire from time to time. The interviewer has just asked why this happens, and the psychologist starts a lengthy answer like this:

\[(24) \text{ (transcribed from a Swedish radio program, 2013; } P = \text{ psychologist)}\]
1. P: asså ett sätt att tänka om detta e: ju (0.7) e: ju
   well one way of thinking about this i:s PRT i:s PRT
   well one way of thinking about this i:s y’know (0.7) i:s y’know
2. faktist stress. (0.4) tror ja spelar (.) en r’oll.
   actually stress think I plays a role.
   actually stress (0.4) I think plays a role.
3. ((the turn is continued))

The psychologist announces a lengthy answer with asså (‘well’, ‘after all’), which is followed by a heavy topicalizer (‘one way of thinking about this’) and a copula containing a speech act particle ju, which suggests that whatever will follow could be seen as common knowledge. But she makes a rather long pause followed by a repetition of the copula phrase, and only after that she produces a predicate phrase, a rhematic unit (faktist stress ‘actually stress’). After another pause, in which she lets this sink in, she continues with a new complex clause which in effect is parasitic on the rHEME, retro-constructing this as the theme of the new clause. After the pause, the word stress is retroactively constructed as a pivot in a pivot construction. Clearly, the psychologist produces three increments as three different ideas in the flow of discourse. If we allow pivot utterances to contain pauses and prosodic boundaries (section 10), (24) would be an example.

Bockgård and Norén (2011) have investigated one specific activity type, namely so-called dialect interviews. Their data were collected conducted the 1950s and 1960s in Sweden, when elderly persons were interviewed about old ways of speaking, and particularly about old common names for traditional tools and activities. The activity type, as well as the conversational behaviour of the interviewer, encourages the interviewed persons to find and use the oldest and most regional word variants and expressions. Both interviewer and interviewee orient to this agenda explicitly in many ways, and the interviewee especially when using constructions such as pivot utterances to self-confirm on the use of the ‘right’ dialect forms (excerpt (6)), or self-shift during turns between different epistemic stances towards tellings, reports and words that are used to account for being competent and knowing on matters of local geography, traditions, and practices in the old days.

9. A local turn-internal phenomenon?

In the preceding turn-internal sections (especially section 7), we saw that pivot utterances contribute to solving many tasks and problems in talk-in-interaction, including those relating to more global “units”, such as episodes and superordinate activities. Yet, it seems to us that the pivot structures do not apply primarily to the speaker’s methods of building utterances and turns. (This of course would not exclude the possibility that participants sometimes co-construct pivot utterances; they do, but that applies to many turn types.) If this is true, pivot constructions are fairly local phenomena, like most structures that can be characterized in mainly syntactic terms. In this introduction, we have kept extracts relatively short because of our focus on the linguistic properties and the construction processes of pivot utterances as such. Our position, however, is that contexts are always potentially significant for the analysis of the pragmatic functions and actions of grammatical constructions in talk. As Norén have demonstrated (in this issue), when pivot elements are used in some variants of perspective shifts, they may have interactional significance beyond the immediate turn context.

10. Structural and processual approaches to pivot phenomena

There seem to be roughly two different approaches to pivot (or apo koinou) phenomena in the literature. One, the more classical one, is structural, and is exemplified also by Walker’s (2007) approach. It takes the canonical pivot construction as a prosodically coherent and syntactically continuous, integrated structure (though it is inconsistent according to normative written-language-biased grammars). This theory tends to have a less inclusive definition of ‘pivot construction’.

The other – processual – approach is adopted by most contributors to this journal issue. It looks at pivot utterances as emergent and incrementally configured. The incremental process eventually results in a syntactic pivot (or pivot-like) construction, which can have one or two prosodic boundaries or dips. Pivot phenomena would rather be a family of pivot or pivot-like constructions. Note, however, that according to this theory, also the prosodically coherent type (cf. Walker’s definition) may be incrementally produced in situ, although the speaker in such a case succeeds in producing one prosodically integrated utterance. But since many pivot utterances comprise segments which occur independently (in the
languages in question) as syntactic resources (section 4), the constrictions have arguably an incremental origin in the sociohistorical development.

11. The contributions to this issue

This special issue consists of this introduction and five articles dealing with pivot constructions in different languages. Emma Betz (2013) analyses conversational data from the German dialect of Siebenbürger Sächsisch. She focuses on utterances initiated by a ‘quotative phrase’ like He said and closed by an ‘unquote phrase’ of a similar kind (he said). Accordingly, we are faced with utterances of a mirror-image type, with light entries and exits.

Niklas Norén (2013) draws his data from another Germanic language: Swedish. However, he focuses on quite a different aspect, namely how pivot constructions, primarily of an asymmetrical type, tend to change perspectives on topics from the first segment (pre-pivot + pivot) to the second one (pivot + post-pivot). Thus, pivot utterances appear to be a turn-internal device for perspective shifts.

Jan Lindström (2013) explicitly compares two typologically different languages: Swedish and Finnish. Despite certain similarities, these languages differ on important points; for example, Finnish has a much richer morphology than Swedish, and does not have the basic V2 order typical of Swedish (and German). This creates different conditions for various pivot utterance types. For example, Lindström argues that Finnish has a much lesser propensity for mirror-image constructions than Swedish. On the basis of the structural divergences, he goes on to discuss various functions of pivot utterances.

Tii Hennoste (2013) draws his data from another Finno-Ugric language, Estonian, which also has quite a rich morphology. Hennoste documents a large number of forms and functions of Estonian pivot constructions. In particular, he shows that Estonian has particular conditions of occurrence for certain pivot utterance types. For example, Estonian shares with Finnish and German the framing construction (section 7), which can lead to particular types of pivot utterances (example (23)). He also adduces interesting examples of two pivots in the same utterance. Another characteristic of Estonian (and Finnish) is the occurrence of the auxiliary verb olem 'to be' in two quite different constructions, “regular” predicative constructions (as in ma olen 'I am') and the possessive construction (mul on N (nomin), where mul is the pronoun 'l' in the adessive, literally: 'with me (is N)', that is: 'I have N'). This paves the ground for pivot utterances in which the speaker can shift from one olem construction in the pre-pivot to the next in the post-pivot. As regards functions, Hennoste stresses that pivot utterances have a special function in self-repairs in Estonian; they form a special method to do an embedded repair unobtrusively in post-pivots.

Finally, Simona Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher (2013) work with French conversational data. They also point to a language-specific feature, namely, the strong preference in French for so called dislocated phrases, primarily noun phrases (but occasionally also infinitival verb phrases), positioned in the peripheries of turns, i.e. outside of the main finite clause. French conversational grammar also allows speakers to use both “left” (that is, initial) and “right” (final) dislocations in the same turn (or turn-constructional unit), which then creates a kind of pivot-like structure. Accordingly, the authors corroborate a point emphasized in this introduction, namely, that speakers (of different languages) produce pivot utterances using practices and resources that exist independently in the languages in question. They provide strong arguments for the point that pivot utterances are incrementally built.

Appendix A. Transcription key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Sign description</th>
<th>Indicates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Final full stop.</td>
<td>Final falling intonation on prosodic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Final comma.</td>
<td>Final low rise on prosodic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Final upside-down question mark.</td>
<td>Final mid rise on prosodic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Final question mark.</td>
<td>Final high rise on prosodic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(</td>
<td>Full stop within parenthesis.</td>
<td>Silence shorter than 0.2 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.(1,2)</td>
<td>Digit within parenthesis.</td>
<td>Silences measured in tenths of a second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ná::</td>
<td>Colon(s) at the end of a word.</td>
<td>Prolongation of speech sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do-</td>
<td>Hyphen at the end of a word.</td>
<td>Cut off word or prosodic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.hh</td>
<td>Full stop before one or several 'h'.</td>
<td>Audible in-breath (inhalation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hab-1</td>
<td>Equal sign in between words.</td>
<td>Latching (two items are latched together off-beat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klí’entidega</td>
<td>Grave accent sign before or in within words.</td>
<td>Emphasis or stress in Estonian examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s’e’ffacer; it’s; e’re</td>
<td>Apostrophe in between words.</td>
<td>Elision of letters to indicate omission of speech sound or speech segment in talk, or to indicate citation of particles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ tar de ju...</td>
<td>Square bracket pointing right.</td>
<td>Beginning of turn overlap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..på lägenhet]</td>
<td>Square bracket pointing left.</td>
<td>End of turn overlap.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## References


Forsskål, Mona. 2008. Konstruktioner i interaktion. de e som resurs i samtal (Constructions in interaction. de e ’it is’ as a resource in Conversation) (Diss.). Institutionen för nordiska språk och nordisk litteratur, Helsingfors universitet.


### Appendix A (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Sign description</th>
<th>Indicates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>↑Högsby</td>
<td>Arrow-up before syllable.</td>
<td>Pitch peak during utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amitieås</td>
<td>Underlining of utterance segment.</td>
<td>Emphasis or focal stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;sa ja&lt;</td>
<td>Arrows pointing inwards surr. talk.</td>
<td>Faster talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+de e+</td>
<td>Plus signs surrounding talk.</td>
<td>Increased speech volume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAR JU</td>
<td>Talk in capitals.</td>
<td>Increased speech volume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;text.&quot;</td>
<td>Superscripted circles surrounding talk.</td>
<td>Creaky voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>eh:</em></td>
<td>Star signs surrounding talk.</td>
<td>Transcriber’s difficulty of interpreting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(talk)</td>
<td>Parentheses surrounding talk.</td>
<td>The pivot construction segment in turns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>Talk marked with bold face.</td>
<td>The pivot segment within a PC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk talk talk</td>
<td>Talk marked with grey shading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Niklas Norén is senior lecturer in education at Uppsala University, and an associate researcher at the Department of Neuroscience, Speech and Language Pathology, Uppsala University. He has published work on various grammatical constructions in Swedish conversational talk. He achieved his Ph.D. in Language and Culture at Linköping University in 2007. His Ph.D. thesis is a comprehensive empirical study of pivot constructions in Swedish talk. He is also doing research within the area of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) from a dialogical theoretical perspective. One particular area of interest are the ways high technological communication aids contribute to shape and change interaction.

Per Linell has been a professor at Linköping University since 1981, and was appointed “distinguished researcher” by the Swedish Research Council in 2004. He is now senior professor in the Department of Education, Communication and Learning at Göteborg University. He has worked and published considerably on the grammar and lexical semantics of Swedish conversational language and on dialogical linguistics and discourse theory in general. Among his recent research interests is the opposition between dialogical theories and extreme individualism in psychology and linguistics, and he stresses the interdependences between individuals and “others” (other individuals, groups, generalized others, cultures, artefacts, etc.). This overlaps with, among other approaches, socio-cultural theories of knowing, thinking, languaging and coping with the world.