Positionally-sensitive action-ascription

Uses of *Kannst du X?* 'Can you X?' in their sequential and multimodal context

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Schegloff (1996) has argued that grammars are "positionally-sensitive", implying that the situated use and understanding of linguistic formats depends on their sequential position. Analyzing the German format *Kannst du X?* (corresponding to English *Can you X?*) based on 82 instances from a large corpus of talk-in-interaction (FOLK), this paper shows how different action-ascriptions to turns using the same format depend on various orders of context. We show that not only sequential position, but also epistemic status, interactional histories, multimodal conduct, and linguistic devices co-occurring in the same turn are decisive for the action implemented by the format. The range of actions performed with *Kannst du X?* and their close interpretive interrelationship suggest that they should not be viewed as a fixed inventory of context-dependent interpretations of the format. Rather, the format provides for a root-interpretation that can be adapted to local contextual contingencies, yielding situated action-ascriptions that depend on constraints created by contexts of use.

Keywords: action-ascription, request, question, Interactional Linguistics, Conversation Analysis, modal verbs, positionally-sensitive grammar, German

1. Introduction

The study of action-formation has become a major focus of research in Conversation Analysis (CA) and Interactional Linguistics (IL). In particular, linguistic formats used for implementing requests and related actions that are designed to get others to perform certain actions have received profound analytic interest (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Floyd, Rossi, & Enfield 2020; Sorjonen, Raevaara, & Couper-Kuhlen 2017; Rossi 2015; Zinken 2016). Action-formation concerns "how

are the resources of the language, the body, the environment of the interaction, and position in the interaction fashioned into conformations designed to be, and to be recognizable by recipients as, particular actions" (Schegloff 2007, p.xiv). Action-ascription, on the other hand, concerns "how such forms are actually understood by recipients to be carrying out a particular action" (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018, p.210). This close relationship between formation and ascription of actions is basic for the establishment of intersubjectivity in interaction, because the action that is the "main job" (Levinson 2013, p.103) of a turn determines what kind of response is *relevant* next. According to our view, 'action-ascription' does not only concern the ascription that is indexed by the recipient's immediate response in the next turn; rather, we conceive of 'action-ascription' as including all participants' interpretations concerning some focal action over the course of an interactional sequence, importantly also encompassing the speaker's own ascriptions as they become tangible by their turn-design and consecutive actions (e.g., in third position). Nevertheless, the relationship between action-formation and action-ascription is not always straightforward, as can be seen by ambiguities (Schegloff 1984; Stivers, Rossi & Chalfoun submitted), misunderstandings and misalignments (Couper-Kuhlen 2014). The observation that one action can be treated as different kinds of action, begs the question on which factors action-ascription builds.

Although linguistic formats are usually multifunctional (Bolinger 1957; Couper-Kuhlen 2014), most studies on action-formation concentrated on factors that speakers orient to when choosing among different formats for one specific action, but rarely on factors that enter into action-ascription. Yet, some studies have revealed factors that influence how a specific linguistic format is understood in a given context, e.g., sequential position (Schegloff 1984), epistemics (Heritage 2012; Robinson 2013; Rossi 2018), deontics (Stevanovic & Peräkylä 2012), benefits (Clayman & Heritage 2014), participant's responsibilities, and embodied conduct (Rossi & Zinken 2016; see Deppermann & Haugh 2021 and Heritage 2021 for overviews of factors affecting action-ascription). In line with this work, this paper aims at elucidating the relationship of sequential, pragmatic, and multimodal context to action-ascription concerning a specific linguistic format.

We will be using a classic example of a linguistic format having the potential for implementing different actions. We study the format *Kannst du X?* 'Can you X?', which has, since Searle (1975), come to be known as a prototype for indirect speech acts, i.e., for a question-format that can be used for requesting. We are interested in how the position (Schegloff 1984, 1996) of the *Kannst du X?*-turn matters to the action ascribed to it. In addition to the verbal sequential context, our understanding of *position* includes the nonverbal context as well (cf. Schegloff 1996, p.104, point 7). *Nonverbal context* here refers to speaker's and recipient's

embodied actions immediately before the *Kannst du X?*-turn. It also includes spatial and object-related contingencies that matter for the ongoing course(s) of action. Thus, our notion of *positionally-sensitive action-ascription* implies a holistic, multimodal understanding of *position*.

We first give an overview of studies of the *Can you X?*-format, which is the English counterpart to the German *Kannst du X?*-format (Section 2). We describe our corpus and the inclusion criteria for our study (Section 3). We provide background on the grammar and semantics of the format (Section 4). The main body of our paper comprises the analysis of varieties of questions and requests for action ascribed to *Kannst du X?* in our data (Section 5). After summarizing the findings (Section 6), we discuss upshots of our study for the general relationship between linguistic formats and action-ascription (Section 7).

2.   Previous research on *can you X?*

In Speech Act Theory, *Can you X?*-interrogatives like *Can you pass me the salt*? are treated as prototypical examples of *indirect speech acts* (Searle 1975). Following Gordon and Lakoff (1971), Searle (1975) assumes a two-step process of interpretation of indirect speech acts: First the literal meaning is processed (a question concerning the addressee's ability to perform an action); if this interpretation is not relevant in the current context, the intended indirect meaning (a request for action) is calculated by means of a conversational implicature.[1] Yet, both interpretations have been claimed to be conventional, not needing additional inferences (Clark 1979). Psycholinguistic priming experiments have shown that hearers/readers take even more time to arrive at the question interpretation, if the context unambiguously favors the request interpretation (Gibbs 1983, 1994). *Can you X?*-interrogatives exhibit a metonymical pragmatic relationship (Thornburg & Panther 1997), because *ability* is a preparatory condition (Searle 1969) of the request: In order to comply with the request, the requestee must be able to perform the compliant action. If this ability is beyond question in the current context, then the request interpretation applies. Ervin-Tripp (1976; Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, & Bell 1987) argues that participants arrive at the relevant interpretation of indirect speech acts by virtue of their understanding of the current situation of discourse, in particular, role-related rights and duties, and expectable next actions. Speaker's intentions must be inferred only if they do not conform to situated expectations.

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1. However, *illocutionary force indicators* (IFIDs, Searle & Vanderveken 1985) such as *please* may serve as cues in the utterance that signal the request interpretation (Gordon & Lakoff 1971).

Speech-act theoretic research uses invented examples or experiments, aiming for an intuition-based and cognitively-oriented explanation of how recipients understand indirect speech acts. In contrast, CA builds on the understandings that are "demonstrably relevant to, and employed by, the participants" (Schegloff 1988, p. 61). A reanalysis of indirect speech acts as sequentially grounded actions was offered by Levinson (1983, pp. 356–364). He claims that the request interpretation results from a compacted interactional sequence, interrogatives being employed for building pre-sequences that check whether a necessary precondition for complying with an intended request holds. Pre-requests help to avoid producing a request that will be rejected. Such pre-requests can be interpreted and responded to as requests themselves, if the pre-conditions are met, so a four-part sequence of a pre-sequence [*Can you X?* + answer] and the core sequence [request + compliance] is condensed to a two-part sequence [pre-request[2] and request compliance].

Polar interrogatives like *Can you X?* have been considered as *double-barreled actions* (Schegloff 2007, pp. 76–78): The question[3] can function as a *vehicle* or *cargo* (Rossi 2018) for accomplishing the request. The conversational reality of double-barreledness is claimed to be evident if recipients respond to both actions, typically first responding to the vehicle (answering the question) and then to the facilitated action (granting the request; Schegloff 2007; Rossi 2018).[4] CA and IL research on modal polar interrogatives denoting the recipient's willingness or ability like *Can you X?* has focused only on one specific social action which can be accomplished with this *social action format* (Fox 2007), namely *requests for action or objects*[5] (Wootton 2005; Curl & Drew 2008; Craven & Potter 2010; Antaki & Kent 2012; Rossi 2015, Chapter 4; Fox & Heinemann 2016, 2017; Gubina 2021a). It has been shown that *Can you X?*-requests are used if granting is potentially problematic due to (i) the recipient's involvement in a different course of action, which must be abandoned when complying (Zinken & Ogiermann 2013; Gubina 2021a); (ii) the requester's low entitlement to request the action; (iii) recipient's previously displayed resistance to comply; and (iv) a high degree of imposition on the recip-

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2. This use of 'pre-request' is different from Schegloff's understanding of pre-sequences (2007, pp. 28–57), who uses this term only for pre-sequences preceding the base request-sequence. See Fox (2015) for a critical re-examination of Levinson's account.

3. By 'question' we mean a first action of an adjacency pair that makes 'answer' as a second-pair part relevant. See Schegloff (1984) and Stivers & Rossano (2010) for ambiguities concerning the notion *question*.

4. It is disputable whether a confirmation token like *ja/yes* always implements an action of its own. It does not have to be an answer, but could also be a type-conforming token (Raymond 2013) that projects the compliant action.

5. In the following, we use *request* to refer to *requests for action*.

ient (Rossi 2015, Chapter 4). Thus, using *Can you X?* for requests, speakers display the orientation to the recipient's potential lack of *willingness*[6] to comply, while *physical* ability to carry out a targeted action is secured (cf. Searle 1975, p.176, step 4; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, p.32).

Research in CA/IL has only dealt with the use of *Can you X?*-interrogatives for requests. It has not studied what other actions can be carried out with the format. Therefore, it is not settled, which (contextual) resources participants rely on in order to arrive at the action-ascription of *Can you X?*[7] Our paper aims at demonstrating (a) what actions can be accomplished by *Kannst du X?*, (b) how the *position* and *composition* (Schegloff 1993, p.121) of the *Kannst du X?*-turns are used as resources for action-ascription, and (c) how action-ascription is displayed in the local context.

3.   Data and methods

This paper is based on 124:27 hours of video-recorded talk-in-interaction from the FOLK corpus, the Research and Teaching Corpus of Spoken German (Schmidt 2016), which is publicly accessible via dgd.ids-manheim.de. Instances of *Kannst du X?* come from informal settings, interactions at the workplace, pedagogical, and paramedical settings. Our study draws on 82 *Kannst du X?*-cases. In German, there is a lexical distinction between the informal second person singular pronoun *du* ($n=72$), pronoun-omission in informal contexts ($n=4$), the informal second person plural *ihr* ($n=2$), and the formal second person *Sie* ($n=4$), which all have been included in our study.

Using the method of Conversation Analysis (Sidnell & Stivers 2013), we have examined every instance of our collection for the following aspects:

–   *prior development of the interactional sequence* that the *Kannst du X?*-turn is part of, or, if it begins a new sequence, its relationship to the prior sequence,
–   *turn-design* of the *Kannst du X?*-turn, in particular, the impact of other verbal resources, such as discourse markers and modal particles, for action-formation,
–   *multimodal conduct* of speaker and addressee,

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6.   Fox and Heinemann (2016, p.17) analyze *Can you X?*-turns that orient to the recipient's potential lack of ability to comply and term these cases *requests (for action)*.

7.   But see Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987) for experimental evidence concerning contextual sources affecting children's interpretation of this format.

– *action-ascription* of the *Kannst du X?*-turn, as made available by the response and by subsequent actions of both speaker (esp. accounts and third position) and recipient,
– *participation framework,* and
– *activity type.*

4. Grammar and semantics of *Kannst du X?*

The deontic modal verb *können* (infinitive of *kannst* 'can') can denote

– *normative entitlement*, i.e., the license to perform an action,
– *dispositional* ability, i.e., the competence to perform an action, and/or
– *circumstantial* ability (cf. Kratzer 2012), the physical ability to perform an action under given circumstances.

Kannst du X? is an interrogative format with a V1-word order:

Excerpt 1.

```
kAnnst  du des HEben   mit dem     was zeug was da    drauf  is.
can-2SG 2SG it  lift-INF with the.N.DAT what stuff what there thereon is
can you lift it with all the stuff lying on it
```

The modal verb *kannst* is inflected for informal (or formal) second person indicative (simple present) mood. It occurs turn-initially, followed by the pronominal second person subject *du,* which, in German, is often cliticized to the verb [V+PRO (*kannste*)] or even omitted. The other arguments (like the demonstrative pronoun in the accusative case *des* 'it') depend on the valence structure of the infinitive main verb (*heben* 'to lift'), which is produced only after all arguments have been realized, implementing the so-called *right sentence bracket* (German: *Satzklammer*), which makes for a possibly complete syntactic structure of an interrogative. Yet, there may be incremented elements after the main verb infinitive (Auer 1996), as in Excerpt (1) *mit dem was zeug was da drauf is* 'with all the stuff lying on it'. *Kannst du X?*-turns are produced with different final intonation contours, which do not seem to affect the action-type.

5. Uses of *Kannst du X?*

In what follows, we explore social actions that can be accomplished with *Kannst du X?*. We distinguish *questions* (Section 5.1), and *requests for actions* (Section 5.2)

as two generic action-types, which encompass a range of uses distinguished by more fine-grained action-relevant properties.

5.1   *Kannst du X?* used as question concerning the recipient's ability, the permissibility, or the possibility of action

In contrast to requests, *questions* do not make any practical action from the recipient relevant. Instead, they aim at either (i) requesting information about the recipient's skills and competence, or (ii) questioning the recipient's rights to do the action projected or already initiated by them. We start with a case of *Kannst du X?* used for requesting information. In Excerpt (2), an applicant who is looking for a room in a shared apartment is interviewed by the residents. The applicant AS produces a response cry *oh mein GOTT,* 'oh my god' (l. 01), which indexes trouble, followed by the question *was könnt ich NOCH erzählen* 'what else can I tell' (l. 02). It is not addressed at any particular recipient, neither verbally nor through gaze (Figure 1), but could be answered by all participants including the questioner herself.

Excerpt 2.
Shared_flat_interview_FOLK_E_00251_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c631_kochen

```
01    AS    *oh mein GOTT,=
                oh my God
      as-g  *gaze at the table--->

02    AS    =was könnt ich NOCH erzählen.#=hm:;
             what else can I tell you hm
                                        #fig.1
```
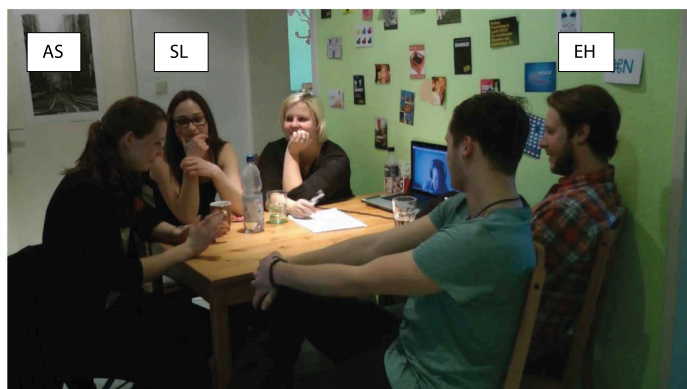

Figure 1. AS gazes at the table

```
03    SL    kannst  du KOCHen?
            can-2SG 2SG cook-INF
            can you cook
```

```
04        (0.3)

05   SL   ((laughs))

06        (1.2)

07   EH    PI[zza;     ((laughs)) ]
08   AS    +*[es  REIcht  *für mei]ne verhältnisse;
                  it's sufficient for my standards
     as-f  -->+
     as-g  --->*gaze at EH---*gaze at AS--->>
```

In l. 03, SL offers a candidate topic (Schegloff 2007, pp. 169–180), asking AS whether she can cook. After a pause, another resident (EH) offers a candidate answer (l. 07), which overlaps with AS's non-type-conforming response (Raymond 2013) to the original question in l. 08, namely, that her cooking is sufficient for her standards. EH's and AS's responses demonstrate their understanding of SL's question in l. 03 as a request for information. The action implemented with *Kannst du X?* is in line with the recipient's projectable course of action, namely expanding the series of autobiographical topics of the applicant. *Kannst du X?* is understood as a request for information because the performance of the action in question, cooking, clearly is not expected in this context. Moreover, *kochen* 'to cook' is used without any arguments, thus referring to AS's cooking skills in general.

A second and a third variant of questions in our data are *requests for information concerning situated action possibilities* and *requests concerning the permissibility of an action*. In Excerpt (3), both action-ascriptions are at issue, made relevant by a known-answer question. A driving school instructor (INS) checks whether the student (STU) has the required knowledge for doing the next action correctly, here: turning right at the upcoming intersection.

Excerpt 3.
driving_lesson_FOLK_E_00171_SE_01_T_01_DF_01_c464_weiterfahren

```
01   INS   (.) °hh so;
                  so

02   INS   (.) kAnnst du  da   vorne   WEIterfahrn?+#
               can-2SG 2SG there in.front drive-on-INF
               can you drive on over there

     ins                              --->+gaze at STU--->
                                          #fig.2
```

Figure 2. Driving school car approaches intersection

```
03    STU    (0.6) JAha,+
                    yes
      ins            --->+

04    INS    N:EI:N.
             no

05           (0.7)

06    INS    du kannst [NUR  ]
             you can only
07    STU              [irgend]wie rechts und LI[NKS,]
                        somehow to the right and to the left
08    INS                                     [  R]I::CHtig;=
                                                  right

09           =un wo müssen wir HIN?
             and where do we have to go

10    STU    (1.7) WEISS i nich;
                   I do not know
11           (0.4) rechts,
                   to the right

12    INS    j:a:.
             yes
13           (0.3) das is im unterricht so beSPROCHen;
                   that is how it was discussed at the (theoretical) lesson
```

Using the *Kannst du X?*-format, INS asks STU whether he can drive on at the end of the street (l. 02, Figure 2). STU gives an affirmative answer (l. 03), which is immediately corrected by INS (l. 04). In the next turn, INS starts formulating an alternative, which is being co-constructed by STU (l. 07), stating that he can drive either to the left or to the right. STU thus treats the *Kannst du X?*-turn in l. 02 as a request for information concerning situated action possibilities. INS positively assesses the student's answer (l. 08).[8]

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8. The correction sequence seems to be caused by a misunderstanding concerning the driving possibilities denoted by the verb *weiterfahren* 'drive on' (l. 02): While INS uses it with the meaning 'to continue driving forward', STU seems to have understood its meaning as 'to con-

Figure 3. T-intersection

The answer to INS's *Kannst du X?*-interrogative is not dependent on STU's physical ability to drive forward, but rather on spatial contingencies to which both participants have visual access (Figures 2–3). Thus, the *Kannst du X?*-turn is not aimed at checking the STU's ability to do the next relevant action, but rather to remind him of action possibilities at an upcoming difficult situation.

INS continues the sequence by asking which direction they must take ('and where do we have to go', l. 09).[9] INS thus retrospectively makes a different action-ascription of his turn in l. 02 relevant, namely, a *request concerning the permissibility of an action*. INS's follow-up request makes clear that his *Kannst du X?*-request was designed to make STU reflect on how he must act at the next decision point, i.e., the junction. STU's delayed response (l. 10–11) is accepted by INS (l. 12), who, by reminding the theoretical lessons, emphasizes the normative status of the correct answer (l. 13).

Kannst du X?-questions can advance interactional progression or prepare the grounds for next practical actions. They can also be used to stall the course of action already initiated by the recipient, if they are used for *questioning* the grounds of the recipient's announced or initiated course of action. One way to do this is to initiate a repair-sequence by a knowledge-discrepancy question (Steensig & Heinemann 2013). In Excerpt (4), four friends are playing the card-game *Munchkin*. When the excerpt begins, it is TW's turn, but he needs time to consider what to do (l. 02–3). After a pause, he announces that he is going to sell the card *billigross* 'cheap steed' (l. 05) and accounts for his decision (l. 06): As

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tinue driving'. Continuing to drive forward, however, is impossible, because they are approaching a t-intersection. Consequently, STU can only drive to the left or to the right (Figure 3).

9. The turn-beginning with *und* 'and' indexes that the question follows the speaker's predefined agenda, which he pursues independently of the recipient's turn (Heritage & Sorjonen 1994).

he has a special race card of *halbling* 'half-breed', he can sell an item at twice the price.

Excerpt 4.
Board game_FOLK_E_00204_SE_01_T_03_DF_01_c374_verkaufen

```
01   LS   [wer is_n eigenlich D]RAN,
           whose turn is it actually
02   TW   [bin ICH jetzt;      ]
           I am now

03   TW   moMENT,=ich überLEG <<p> noch ob ich verSUCHen soll >;
           just a moment I am still thinking whether I should try

04        (2.0)

05   TW   °h ich glaub (0.3) ich bin jetz einfach ma so ich verkauf jetz
           ma mein BILligross.
           I think I am now just PTCL like I will sell PTCL my cheap steed
           (card)

06   TW   (.) ich darf nämlich als halbling (.) einen gegenstand im
           grunde zum doppelten <<creaky> PREIS verkaufen >;
           I can actually as a half-breed sell an item basically at twice
           the price

07   LS   ((moans))

08   LM   kanns [du noch  was]    verKAUfen,
           can.2SG 2SG still anything sell-INF
           can you still sell anything
09   TW         [also       ]
                  so

10   TW   pff-
11        (0.3)
12   TW   joa KLAR,
           yes sure

13        (0.7)

14   LS   äh JA;
           uhm yes

15   TW   s[olang des_n WERT hat,]
           as long as it has (some) value
16   LM    [stimmt MIETling haste] nich;=stimmt;
            right you don't have a hireling right
```

In response to TW's announcement, LM asks him whether he can still sell any-thing (l. 08), thus questioning whether the normative pre-condition, i.e., the per-missibility of the action TW has announced is fulfilled. The modal verb *können* here does not refer to the addressee's physical ability to carry out the action, but

rather to TW's entitlement (Curl & Drew 2008) to carry out the planned action according to the game-rules. This is supported by LM's replacement of the object in TW's announcement – *einen gegenstand* 'an item' – by a more generalized term *was* 'anything'. *Kannst du X?* works to suspend the recipient's action until its normative basis is verified. TW responds with the interjection *pff*, which indexes insecurity (l. 10; Baldauf-Quilliatre & Imo 2020), but then gives an affirmative answer (*joa KLAR,* 'yes sure', l. 12), followed by a confirmation from LS (l. 14). As these confirmations are not taken up by LM, TW produces an increment in which he accounts for the utility of his action (*s[olang des_n WERT hat,* 'as long as it has some value', l. 15). In overlap, LM closes the repair-sequence with the confirmation token *stimmt* 'right', (Betz 2015) and provides a reason herself: *MIETling haste nich* 'you don't have a hireling card' (l. 16).

Like in cases of other-repair initiation, *Kannst du X?* used for challenges is responsive to the addressee's prior turn. However, whereas other-repair-initiation questions the grounds for the recipient's prior action, challenges are designed to stop the recipient's action for good. An example is Excerpt (5). CA is baking muffins, while her mother RA watches her. Before the excerpt, CA separated egg whites from yolks by making a hole in the eggshell and shaking the egg until the egg-white is out. RA assesses CA's procedure as strange, and tells her that it should be done differently (l. 01). Despite CA's resistance (l. 02), RA continues with an explanation of how to separate egg-whites and yolks correctly (l. 03–05).

Excerpt 5.
Baking_FOLK_E_00331_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c112_backen

```
01   RA    des macht man ANders.
             it's done differently

02   CA    (.) is doch total eGAL.
               (it) does not PTCL matter at all

03   RA    WEISST du wie man des MACHT.
             do you now how it's done

04   RA    °h man macht die GANZ AUf;=
               you open them completely

05   RA    [=und und SCHÜTtet es          ] dann so;
             and and then pour it like that
06   CA    [<<h> *kannst du     +BACKen?&# >]
                 kannst du      bake-INF
                 can-2SG 2SG
                 can you bake
     ca-f        *raised eyebrows and smile--->
     ca-b   >>to work space------+turns to RA--->
     ca-g                         &gaze at RA--->
                                   #fig.4
```

Figure 4. CA turns around, gazes at RA with raised eyebrows, and smiles

```
07    RA     (0.3)  j[a,] *+&
                      yes
      ca-f             --->*
      ca-b              --->+back to work space--->>
      ca-g              --->&
08    CA            [j ]a,
                      yes

09    CA     (.) aber wenn ich des versUche dies (.)
                  but if I try that to

10           (0.3)

11    CA     äh [gAnz zu ÖFfnen?          ]
                  open this completely
12    RA        [dann hast DU EIerschale]n da drin.=ja,
                  then you will have egg shells in there yes

13    CA     weißte was ich dann MAChe,
             you know what I do next

14    RA     hm?

15    CA     +((imitates sound of breaking eggs))+
      ca-b   +iconic gesture--------------------------+

16    RA     ERNST<<h>haft>?
             seriously

17    CA     ja (.) aber das is [ganz EIGenartig.]
             yes but it is very strange
18    RA                        [doch.=EIer    t]rennen KANN ich.
                                 PTCL separating eggs (is what) I can do
```

Before RA completes her explanation, CA interrupts, turns away towards RA, looks at her and asks whether RA can bake (l. 06, Figure 4). CA's turn is produced with high pitch register and raised eyebrows, a canonical facial expression for dis-

belief (Ekman 1979). Since CA is RA's daughter and therefore shares an interactional history concerning RA's baking skills, CA does not seem to be trying to solicit information about her skills. Rather, she challenges RA's ability to bake as a pre-condition for RA's entitlement to produce her explanation and criticize CA's conduct.[10] Both the shared interactional history, its sequential position and its multimodal design-features make the *Kannst du X?*-turn recognizable as a *challenge* (Koshik 2003), produced to stall the recipient's ongoing action by indexing lacking grounds for it. RA gives an affirmative answer (l. 07), thus not treating the *Kannst du X?*-turn as a challenge, but rather as a question. Yet, seven turns later, RA produces the response token *doch* and states that separating eggs is something she can do (l. 18). RA's turn in l. 18 is clearly not responsive to CA's prior turn, but is a delayed response to CA's *Kannst du X?*-question in l. 06.[11] As a response token, German *doch* is used for rejecting disagreement, or disbelief expressed through newsmarks and challenges (Gubina 2021b). RA's *doch* denies the negative assertion implied by CA's *Kannst du X?*-turn and thus treats it as a challenge, whose rejection is accounted for by her following claim that she can separate eggs. With *EIer trennen KANN ich.* (l.18), CA pushes back against a possible implicature of her lack of ability to perform the action properly. This can be seen as a transformative answer (Stivers & Hayashi 2010), which resists the question's agenda by returning from *backen* 'to bake' to *eier trennen* 'to separate eggs', i.e., the topic of RA's explanation. Thus, RA rejects the skill of baking as a normative requirement for being entitled to explain CA the right way of separating eggs.

When using *Kannst du X?* for questioning the grounds for the recipient's prior (or projected) action, speakers index that they have doubts concerning the recipient's rights for their action, which can be weaker (other-repair-initiation) or stronger (challenge). Problematizing uses of *Kannst du X?* (as in Excerpts 4 and 5) stand out by sequential features (questioning the grounds of the prior action of the recipient), a speaker having some knowledge about the issue that the *Kannst du X?*-turn addresses, and, especially in the case of challenges, by design-features of the *Kannst du X?*-turn itself. Yet, in both excerpts they are treated in the same way as questions, i.e., by responding with a confirmation. Although the precise (intended) local action the *Kannst du X?*-turn is to implement may be different,

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10. Earlier in the interaction, CA rejected RA's offer of assistance, claiming that RA cannot bake.

11. The delayed response might be explained by the fact that CA had latched her account (l. 08–15) to RA's initial response to the challenge.

the question-interpretation is a root-interpretation, which is available in all uses of the format for other actions than requesting. Moreover, there is a cline in the interpretation related to the *Kannst du X?*-speaker's epistemic position/status (cf. Heritage 2012, pp. 20–23; Robinson 2013; Steensig & Heinemann 2013):

– When the speaker assumes an unknowing epistemic position/status (Excerpt 2), a question-interpretation is relevant;
– when the speaker "is asking from a position where the knowledge he/she had seems no longer to be valid" (Steensig & Heinemann 2013, p. 213), a knowledge-discrepancy question, i.e., an other-repair-initiation, is implemented (Excerpt 4),
– speaker's strong epistemic position/status concerning the validity of the propositional content of the *Kannst du X?*-turn makes it a known-answer question (Excerpt 3), which
– becomes a challenge, if it contests the validity of the normative grounds of the recipient's action (Excerpt 5).

5.2   *Kannst du X?* used as request for action

In this sub-section, we show that *Kannst du X?* is used for implementing immediate or remote requests for the speaker's benefit, but also for requests deemed to test the suitability of an action or the ability to perform the action itself. The request-ascription to a *Kannst du X?*-turn can arise as an implication, if a positive answer to a question about the addressee's ability ability implemented by *Kannst du X?* can be given.

An example of an immediate, here-and-now request, which has been in focus of virtually all of the prior research on the conversational use of the cognates of *Kannst du X?* (see Section 2) in various languages, is Excerpt (6). EL and LL are renovating their shower cabin. In l. 01, EL asks where they are going to place the cabin door, which needs to be unhooked. LL suggests placing it on the left (l. 02, 04; Figure 5). EL responds that she will remove the stool, which stands there (l. 05). Simultaneously, she turns herself towards the stool.

Excerpt 6.
Bath_renovation_FOLK_E_00299_SE_01_T_01_DF_01_c130_give[12]

```
01    EL     *wo stelln wer die tür dann HIN?
              where are we going to place the door then
       ll-g  *at stool--->
```

---

12. See Deppermann & Schmidt (2021) for a more elaborate multimodal analysis of the temporal order of the sequence.

```
02    LL    (1.3) *öh (.) &pff::: *(.) am besten hier# auf die SEIte;=Oder,
                   uhm pff preferably here on the side or
      ll-g    --->*right----------*at stool--->
      el-b               &head turn at stool--->
                                              #fig.5
```


Figure 5. LL and EL gaze at the stool

```
03    EL    (0.8) &dann [trag      ]
                   then (I will) carry
      el-b         &leans to stool--->
04    LL                [würd ich ]SAgn.
                         I would say

05    EL    (0.7) dann& *trag ich das höckerchen (.) ers RAUS,
                   then I will first carry the stool out
      ll-g         --->*,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,--->
      el-b         --->&turns right--->

06          &(0.5)#
      el-b  &turns to stool, starts standing up--->
                   #fig.6
```
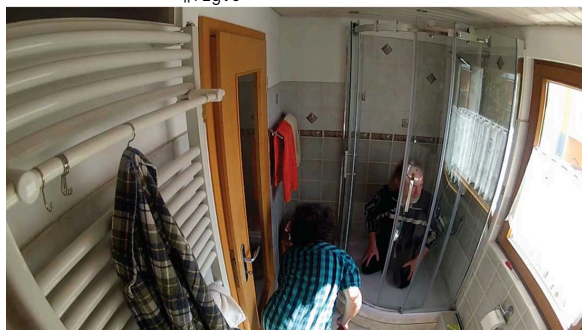

Figure 6. EL turns to the stool and starts standing up

```
07    LL    °h (.) äh   *KANNST%  du  mir*  &schon   mal &da
                        PTCL  can.2SG 2SG me.DAT   already PTCL  there
      ll-g  ,,,,,,,,,,,,*at object-------*
      ll-b                   %points at object---->
      el-b                              &turn to LL--&to object--->
      LL    den      %den#   &SCHRAUbenzieher geben;
            the.M.ACC  the.M.ACC   screwdriver      give.INF
            uh can you already give me there the the screwdriver
      el-b  ---------------------&reaches for object--->
      ll-b  --------->%
                       #fig.7
```


Figure 7. EL looks at the object (screwdriver) that LL points at

```
08          (0.2)
09    LL    dann kann ich nämlich (0.3) schon mal die (0.2)&(1.3) dinger
            LÖSen hier.
            then I can already loosen those things here
      el-b                                        &gives object
            to LL--->>
10          (2.0)
```

In l. 07, LL asks EL to give him a screwdriver. This request is in line neither with the recipient's announced and initiated local project of removing the stool (l. 03–6) nor with her embodied action-trajectory (Figure 6). Therefore, for granting the request, EL suspends her own project, turns towards the object (Figure 7), gives the screwdriver to LL and only afterwards carries the stool out of the bathroom.

The main features of *Kannst du X?*-requests for immediate actions and their *home environment* (Zinken & Ogierman 2013, p. 257) are the following (see Gubina 2021 for more elaborate analyses):

– *Type of targeted action: Kannst du X?* is used for requesting low-cost actions, e.g., lending or transferring of free (Goffman 1971) and shared goods (Zinken 2015).
– *Relationship to recipient's course of action: Kannst du X?*-requests do not align with the recipient's projected or already initiated course of action. They inter-

rupt the recipient's local project, which has to be suspended for granting the request.

– *Recipient's physical ability* to carry out the requested action is not in question. Thus, the use of *Kannst du X?* in such cases does not seem to be motivated by doubts concerning the recipient's ability, but rather by the level of the "appreciable imposition" (Rossi 2015, p.141) on the recipient.

Kannst du X?-requests can also target *remote actions*, which the requestee should perform after the current interactional event. In Excerpt (7), ZM first reminds her daughter LM to get her tickets for a flea-market (l. 01–04). Afterwards, using a *Kannst du X?*-format, ZM asks LM to buy her tickets for a tribute-concert to the rock-band Queen (l. 09–12).

Excerpt 7.
car_drive_FOLK_E_00291_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c1251_karten_für_queen

```
01    ZM    wegen diesem ähm °h (.) EINtritt für diesen ähm ja,=
             concerning this erm    ticket for the erm well
02    ZM    =weißt du so (0.3) ((lipsmack)) °h (.) äh (.) neuhemsbacher
             mar[kt.=also ]FLOHmarkt,
             you know like erm NAME I mean flea-market
03    LM       [ja,     ]
                yes
04    ZM    °h da muss ma glaub ich schon sich bisschen äh a also d FRÜHer
             weißt [du so        ]
             there one must oneself I guess already a bit erm I mean earlier
             do you know like
05    LM          [jaJA,=ich hab ]ja geSAGT,=
                   yes yes I have already said
06          =ich KÜMmer mich [drum. ]
             I'll take care of it
07    ZM                      [HM_hm,]
                               uhum

08          (0.6)

09    ZM    und kannst du mir die die die kArten für queen beSORgen,=
             and can.2SG you me the the the tickets for Queen get.INF
             and can you buy me the the the tickets for Queen

10    LM    =ja MACH ich,=
             yes I will
11          =MACH ich;
             I will

12    ZM    zwei STÜCK;
             two tickets
```

As ZM's *Kannst-du*-request (l. 09) is a remote request, LM responds by a compliance projector *ja mach ich* 'yes I will' (l. 10–11; Rauniomaa & Keisanen 2012; Thompson, Fox & Couper-Kuhlen 2015, Chapter 5), which displays her commit-

ment to the future execution of the compliant action, which cannot be performed here and now. Its repetition indexes both that compliance can be taken for granted and that the request therefore is superfluous (cf. Stivers 2004). It can be understood to push back against the presupposition that LM might not do it, also given that it is – like ZM's first request – designed as a reminder (see the demonstrative article *die* 'the'. l. 09).

In Excerpts (6-7), the targeted actions benefit the requester, a feature that Couper-Kuhlen (2014) considers as constitutive of requests. Yet, *Kannst du X?*-requests are produced not only in service of the requester's benefit. Excerpt (8) comes from a band rehearsal. The guitarist KG has just played his solo with his preferred mode of distortion (l. 01). In response, the drummer DH, using a *Kannst du X?*-turn, asks him to add a bit of delay (l. 02).

Excerpt 8.
band_rehearsal_FOLK_E_00374_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c509_delay

```
01          *    (12.1)    *
       kg    *guitar solo*

02    DH    kannst  du    auf  dem        en bisschen deLAY,
            can-2SG you-SG on   the.DAT.MASC a  bit        delay
            can you a bit of delay on it

03          (0.4)

04    TH    oder [und und wie is beim                ZWEI]ten,
            or and and how is (it) with the second
05    DH         [wie  wie  wie  so    en bisschen HALL,]
                  like like like kinda a  bit        reverb

06          (1.6)*   (6.1)   *
       kg        *guitar solo*

07    JS    geNAU,
            exactly
```

DH's *Kannst du X?*-turn in l. 02/05 is a corrective request, which responds to KG's guitar-play. It is not produced to prompt an action for the benefit of the requester DH. DH asks KG to perform a variation of his prior action *in order to test its effectiveness for the goal of joint action*, i.e., for the aesthetic quality of the song. Notably, the request is rather vague (see the gradation *a bit* and the ensuing specification in l. 05), leaving it up to the recipient's expertise to decide on the precise manner of execution. Further evidence that this request aims not only at the recipient accomplishing the action, but also at testing its effectiveness for the joint goal, is found in the third position: After KG's embodied compliance (playing his solo again with more reverb; l. 06), JS positively assesses the targeted action and thus accepts it as a good solution (l. 07).

While *Kannst du X?* can be used to ask for a verbal *claim* concerning the addressee's ability to perform some action (see Excerpt 2), it can also be used to make the recipient *demonstrate* that s/he is able to perform the requested action. Such *diagnostic requests* are frequent in pedagogical and medical settings. In Excerpt (9), the physiotherapist (TH) uses a *Können Sie X?*-turn (the formal variant) to ask the client (CL) to lift his body by leaning on his right arm (Figures 8–9).

Excerpt 9.
Physiotherapy_FOLK_E_00360_SE_01_T_02_DF_01_c369_hochstützen

```
01   TH    ähm (1.0) KÖNnen sie sich      über #dEn        Arm jetzt
           PRT       can-2SG you yourself over  the.masc.acc arm  now
           über die          seite HOCHstützen;
           over the.fem.acc side  up-support-INF
           erm can you now get up by the side using your arm
                                              #fig. 8
02         (2.8)#(0.4)
                #fig. 9
```


Figure 8. CL lies on plank bed, TH instructs him
          to get up using his right arm

Figure 9. CL gets up

```
03   TH    <<p>is kein probLEM.=gell,>
               no problem, right?

04   CL    (0.4) i_ja wie ma_s NIMMT,
                 well it depends on which way you take it

05         (0.8)

06   TH    GING doch,=
           but (it) has worked
07         ging a[ber jetz GUT.]
           but (it) has worked well now
08   CL          [es GE:HT.=JA-]
                   well so-so yes

09   TH    (.) ging GUT;=
               (it) has worked well
```

```
10          =ja des wollt ich jetz (<<pp>gucken,>)
             well that's what I wanted (to see) now

11    CL    ja;
            yes

12    TH    [ob des jetz einf]ach BESser;
             if it now just better
13    CL    [ja JA;           ]
             yes yes

14    TH    °h weil ich sonst hab ich_s GFÜHL,=
              because else I have the feeling

15    TH    =geht_s net GANZ so gu[t;=gell,]
            (it) doesn't work quite as well right?
16    CL                          [ja.=des ] STIMMT;
                                   yes that's true
```

Using the temporal adverb *jetzt* 'now' (l. 01), TH displays that she does not ask for the client's view on it, but requests him to perform the action. The focal stress on *KÖNnen* 'can' (l. 01) displays that CL's ability is at issue. The client performs the requested action properly (Figure 9). TH's response (l. 06–07) indexes that, in spite of CL's reservation (l. 04), the performance went well. TH then explains (l. 10–15) that her request was designed to engender evidence concerning (the progress of) the client's competence to perform the movement.[13]

In Excerpts (8–9), the requested action is neither produced for the benefit of the requester nor instrumental to some next action (as using the screwdriver for removing screws or obtaining tickets to witness a concert). Instead, (the improvement of) the quality of the action itself or the ability to perform the action are at issue. These uses of the *Kannst du X?*-format reflect fundamental concerns that are typical of the settings in which they occur – the interest in finding the most satisfying aesthetic solution in rehearsals in creative settings and the diagnostic interest in identifying competence and progress in pedagogical and medical settings.

We now turn to uses of *Kannst du X?* that fall in-between requests and questions, which we call *request-implicative ability-checks.* In these uses, the recipient's physical or epistemic ability to carry out a specific action that is due next is not secured and potentially problematic. *Kannst du X?*-speakers seek to secure that the precondition to carry out a next relevant action – the recipient's physical or epistemic ability – is met. Request-implicative ability-checks are conditional (cf. Clark 1979, pp. 468–469): If recipients succeed, i.e., *are able* to do it, they carry out the action and, thus, treat the *Kannst-du X?*-turn as a request. If, however, they

---

13. Parry (2013: 109, fn. 3) notes that "Can you do X?"-turns in physiotherapy are sometimes ambiguous between "asking about capacity [...] (and) requesting an action".

are unable to do it, requesters treat disconfirmation as an adequate response and adjust their course of action accordingly. Yet, if recipients are not sure themselves whether they are able to produce it, they can *try* to perform the action. Both the check- and the request-component of an ability-check implemented by *Kannst du X?* can be responded to by the recipient, as in Excerpt (10). A student (STU) describes a caricature that the teacher (TEA) has projected to the board via an overhead projector (l. 01–02). Using a *Kannst du X?*-TCU, TEA asks STU whether he can read what stands below the caricature they have been discussing (l. 07).

Excerpt 10.
Classroom interaction_FOLK_E_00125_SE_01_T_01_DF_01_c197_lesen

```
01    STU    +(.) in der mitte isch (.) ähm *ja ne WAND,
                  in the middle there is uhm PTCL a wall
      stu    +gaze board--->
      tea                               *gaze board--->

02           (0.2) mit STACHeldraht;
                  with barbed wire

03           (0.7)

04    TEA    aHA,
05           (.) en STACHeldrahtzaun,
                  a barbed wire fence
06           (0.4)
07    TEA    un kannste_s  auch *un+ten DRUnter    le+sen_=
             and can-2SG=it also   below  underneath read-INF
             and can you also read what stands below
      tea                    --->*gaze STU--->
      stu                      --->+gaze TEA-------->+gaze board---->>
08    TEA    =<<all>weil_s          so KLEIN is,=>
                  because=PRO.N.3SG so small is
                  because it is so small
09           =kannst du_s   LEsen,
              can-2SG  2SG-it read-INF
              can you read it

10    STU    ja,=*neun*zehnhundertFÜNFundvierzig (und dann) BRUder;
              yes nineteen forty-five (and then) brother
      tea    --->*....*gaze at the board--->>

11           (0.4)

12    TEA    BRUder.
             brother
13           °h oKEY;
```

With the subordinate clause *weil_s so KLEIN is* ('because it's so small', l. 08), TEA formulates a contingency due to which reading might be difficult, if not impossible for STU who is sitting in the last row. It is thus not obvious to TEA that STU *is able* to read the line. During TEA's turn in line 07, STU shifts his gaze to the board.

Only by looking at the referent can STU check whether he is able to read the line on the picture. Thus, the gaze-shift is a *nonverbal try*, which is necessary for answering the question. In line 09, TEA asks STU once again whether he can read it by using the *Kannst du X?*-format. TEA monitors STU until STU confirms his ability and then reads aloud (l. 10). Thus, STU treats the request (l. 07–09) both as a request for information and a request for action, i.e., as a double-barreled action (Schegloff 2007, pp. 75–78). The temporal order of actions in his turn nicely shows the conditional relationship between *being able* to perform the requested action and *performing* the requested action. STU's understanding of TEA's action may additionally have been informed by STU's prior activity. His task was to describe the picture, and reading the text belongs to this.

If *Kannst du X?* is used for requests for action, compliance is treated as potentially problematic and not necessarily taken for granted. Reasons for this can be diverse: The recipient is involved in a competing project (Excerpt 6), the request imposes a costly action (Excerpt 7), the recipient may not want to perform the action, because the request threatens his face or his higher deontic status (e.g., as an expert, Excerpt 8), or the recipient may not be able to execute the action for physical reasons (Excerpts 9–10).

6.   Summary

Our study has shown that different actions can be ascribed to *Kannst Du X?*-turns. In addition to requests for immediate action, which have been the focus of research in CA/IL, and questions concerning the recipient's ability, which have been taken as basic, direct meaning in Speech Act Theory, the format has a variety of more specific uses unexplored before. Table 1 summarizes the action-ascriptions, their grounds, and the kinds of responses that display which action recipients ascribe to the format in its local context. We have demonstrated that the core meaning of *Kannst du X?* is *asking about the other's ability*. It allows for different social actions, depending on (i) their position of the turn within a sequence, (ii) within an activity, and (iii) the epistemic status of the *Kannst du X?*-speaker, which is mostly displayed in the prior context or is inferrable from it. Additional design-features of the *Kannst du X?*-turn that are tied to specific actions (like raised eyebrows in the case of repair-initiations/challenges) can be used to understand the local action-meaning.

Kannst Du X?-turns are always first actions – they make a response conditionally relevant. Yet, action-ascriptions are *positionally sensitive*: They crucially rest on different relationships of the *Kannst du-X?*-turn to the *prior sequential context*. Requests for information and request-implicative ability-checks continue

Table 1. Action ascription to *Kannst du VP?* and its determinants

		Questions		
	Requests for action	*Request for information*	*Other-initiated repair / challenges*	**Request-implicative ability checks**
Function	Assistance/ cooperation solicitation; test of recipient's ability or of effectiveness of action	Information solicitation about recipient's competence or rights to perform the action	Questioning recipient's deontic rights to do an already initiated or announced action	Information solicitation about the recipient's physical and/or epistemic competence to do the action due next and, in the positive case, solicitation of assistance/cooperation
Relation to previous context	Interferes with recipient's nonverbal project / projected course of action	Performance of action denoted by VP is not relevant/ possible; goes in line with the recipient's course of action	Refers back to grounds for recipient's previous turn(s); halts the recipient's course of action	Inquires into possible contingency affecting granting of speaker's (prior/upcoming) request; goes in line with the recipient's course of action initiated by the speaker
Design features	Gaze at object if assistance/ cooperation is sought; gaze at recipient, if ability or effectiveness are tested; actions with available referents; *Optionally,* particles *(ein)mal, bitte*	Gaze at recipient; often generic actions suggesting a dispositional meaning	Gaze at recipient; *Optionally:* expressive prosody, eyebrow raise;	Gaze at recipient; describes possible contingencies; actions with available referents;
Meaning of the modal verb	circumstantial	Circumstantial, dispositional or normative		circumstantial/ dispositional

Table 1. *(continued)*

		Questions		
	Requests for action	*Request for information*	*Other-initiated repair / challenges*	**Request-implicative ability checks**
Speaker's epistemic position/ status (knowing = K+; unknowing = K–)	K– concerning the recipient's *willingness* to comply; K– concerning *recipient's ability* or *effectiveness* in cases of testing; request might be considered as problematic by recipient for various reasons	K– concerning the recipient's *competence* or *rights* (in case of exam questions: speaker is K+)	K+ concerning the lack of recipient's *normative license* because of lack of competence, knowledge and/or deontic rights	K– concerning the recipient's *physical and/or epistemic* competence
Response	Immediate compliance or rejection, except for remote requests	Answer (confirmation or disconfirmation)	Repair/change/ abandonment of or insistence on course of action with account or counter	(Nonverbal try+) compliance or (nonverbal try+) disconfirmation

ongoing activities. Information-requests provide for a coherent topical develop-
ment of an exchange of information. Request-implicative ability-checks are steps
within a projected or already initiated request-sequence (securing the grounds for
it and/or attending to obvious or possible troubles of compliance). In contrast,
Kannst du X? used for immediate requests and for repair-initiations, knowledge-
discrepancy questions and challenges, interfere with the recipient's ongoing
course of action and/or index the potential problematicity of the request. In such
cases, speakers test whether the recipient can perform the action properly, ask for
an alternative embodied involvement, cause the recipient to revise or stop their
course of action, or ask for an action the effectiveness of which for the goals of a
joint project is still insecure. The local action-ascription is often indexed by a type
of *response* that fits the action ascribed.

In addition to sequential position, differences in *epistemic positioning/status*
of the producer of the *Kannst du X?*-turn are crucial for action-ascription. For dif-

ferent actions, different physical, epistemic, deontic and/or volitional facets of the action denoted by the verb of the *Kannst Du X?*-turn matter:

– the willingness of recipients to perform the action matters in the case of requests for action,
– recipients' action-competence is topicalized in requests for information about their ability, in requests for actions destined to test their ability and in some cases of challenges,
– recipients' deontic rights are at issue in the case of requests concerning the permissibility of an action (including repair-initiations and challenges),
– their ability to implement it in the local context is at issue in request-implicative ability-checks.

Epistemic status plays an important role for action-ascription. In most *Kannst du X?*-formatted actions, the speaker inhabits a less knowledgeable position. Yet, in the case of problematizing actions (repair-initiations and challenges), the speaker indexes having at least sufficient epistemic grounds to be skeptical of the legitimacy of the recipient's action. Although they cannot always be gleaned from the interactional sequence, grounds for ascribing the epistemic status are often to be found in, e.g., prior disagreement or lack of affiliation in the case of challenges (Excerpt 5), lack of mutual knowledge in the case of ability-checks (Excerpts 9–10), or doubts concerning the recipient's ability because of prior failures or latency in compliance (Excerpt 9).

7.   Discussion

Our study shows that the link between (linguistic) formats and actions may reveal itself to be more context-dependent than discussed in prior studies, if the use of the format is explored in a wide range of contexts of occurrence. Methodologically, therefore, our study is a plea against premature generalizations of format-action relationships. Instead, more detailed studies of the interplay of (sequential and multimodal, but possibly also other dimensions of) context and linguistic structures in action-ascription are needed. This requires using large corpora that provide the chance for capturing most comprehensively the range of actions that a format can implement. Studies of this kind will be important to enhance our knowledge about how action-ascription works and how language and interactional structures are related to each other. Our work suggests an upshot concerning the relationship between different actions that a format can be used for. Although we have shown how a variety of actions can be implemented with the same format, this paper is not a plea for conceptualizing social action formats

as a list-like enumeration of actions that can be carried out with the same format in different contexts. Rather, a generic, context-independent interpretation of the format – in our case: asking for the possibility that the recipient performs the denoted action – can be seen to be particularized in a range of specific actions depending on facets of the context in which the format is used, including the linguistic and nonverbal design of the action (in our case: requests for different kinds of information, different kinds of requests for action, other-repair-initiation, challenge, request-implicative ability-check). As has already been noted in Speech Act Theory, ability is a pre-condition for complying with a request. Although we have identified all sorts of uses present in a corpus that includes a wide range of different activities and sequence-types, there may well be other actions building on and specifying the possibility-check-interpretation in still other contexts. Rather than conceptualizing the relationship between format, contexts, and actions in terms of polysemy (i.e., fixed context-dependent action-interpretations of the format), our findings lead us to conceive of formats as having a basic, underspecified action-potential, which in our case hinges on the semantics of the modal verb, and which is flexibly adapted to the particulars of the local situation. This importantly means that action-ascriptions do not necessarily reside in an inventory of context-format-action pairings. Rather, action-ascriptions are locally crafted in accountable ways from an underspecified root-meaning together with expectations and constraints that various orders of context set into operation for a turn at the very moment at which it is produced.

8.   Symbols used in transcripts

Sources: Selting et al. (2011); Mondada (2018)

[ ]	overlap and simultaneous talk
=	latching
(.)	micropause (shorter than 0.2 sec)
(2.9)	measured pause
geht_s	assimilation of words
:, ::, :::	segmental lengthening, according to duration
((laughs))	non-verbal vocal actions and events
akZENT	focal accent
akzEnt	secondary stress
?	pitch rising to high at end of intonation phrase
,	pitch rising to mid at end of intonation phrase
-	level pitch at end of intonation phrase

;	pitch falling to mid at end of intonation phrase
.	pitch falling to low at end of intonation phrase
<<f>>	forte, loud
<<h>>	high pitch register
<<p>>	piano, soft
<<all>>	allegro, fast
°h	inbreath
h°	outbreath
<<creaky voice>>	commentaries regarding voice qualities with indication of scope
(solche)	assumed wording
* *	Descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between
+ +	two identical symbols (one symbol per participant)
& &	and are synchronized with corresponding stretches of talk.
*--->	Action continues across subsequent lines
---->*	until same symbol is reached.
>>	Action begins before the excerpt.
--->>	Action continues after the excerpt .
.....	Action-preparation.
----	Action-apex is maintained.
,,,,,	Action-retraction.
ins	Producer of the embodied action is identified if (s)he is not the speaker.
fig	Moment at which a screen shot was taken
#	is indicated with #, showing its position within the turn.

Acknowledgements

Glosses

Source: Leipzig Glossing Rules

2	second person	N	neuter
ACC	accusative	NEG	negation, negative
DAT	dative	PRO	pronoun
INF	infinitive	PTCL	particle
M	masculine	SG	singular

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