

CHAPTER SEVEN

GROUNDING BELIEFS: STRUCTURED VARIATION IN CANADIAN DISCOURSE PARTICLES

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Abstract: The sentence final particle *eh* is often treated as a shibboleth of Canadian English. It has been described extensively in the literature, and yet a concise definition of its function remains elusive: researchers identify numerous functions for *eh*, without providing a way to predict the distribution of these functions. How can a simplex form like *eh* be so complex when it comes to its function? We show that its complexity derives from the fact that *eh*, like any other unit of language, interacts with context, including the syntactic and discourse contexts. We develop an analysis that is able to take into consideration how this interaction comes about. This allows us to identify the contextual variables responsible for the variation in function of *eh*, and it also allows us to understand how *eh* differs from another (apparently simplex) sentence final tag, namely *huh*.

Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt. 'The limits of my knowledge are the limits of my world.'

*Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 5.6.*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss in detail the Canadian tag *eh*, as in (1). While its form is simple, especially compared to more commonly discussed tag questions, as in (1), its function is certainly not, as we will show. Both tags in (1) are used to request confirmation for the content of their host utterances.

- (1) a. It's raining outside, eh?
 b. It's raining outside, isn't it?

With canonical tag questions, as in (1), this function may be analyzed as a function of the complex syntax of the tag question: the conversational effect of the tag is combined with the effect of host clause through some form of coordination. A similar analysis is not obviously available for the simple particle *eh* because *eh* is not considered a clause. However, we will argue that surface appearances are deceptive, and that indeed the function of *eh* can be derived via a syntactic analysis. We argue, following Speas & Tenny (2003), and Haegeman & Hill (2013), that syntactic structure includes a layer of structure dedicated to hosting *Units of Language* (hence UoL's, such as morphemes, words, particles, intonational tunes, etc.). UoL's are interactional in nature, as they are used to facilitate dialogical interaction. We then argue that *eh* is itself syntactically complex, consisting of the particle itself as well as an intonational tune. Each of these UoL's associates with a particular layer of structure responsible for its function: *eh* associates with a Grounding layer, which is responsible for encoding that the propositional utterance is in the set of beliefs of the interlocutors; the intonational tune is associated with a response layer, which is responsible for encoding a request for the addressee to respond. As we shall see, *eh* is ambiguous between a speaker-oriented reading (confirm that what I believe is true) and an addressee-oriented reading (confirm what I think you believe is true). We therefore refer to tags such as *eh* as confirmationals, which are grammatical devices a speaker uses to request confirmation of their belief about the world. We argue that this ambiguity, analogous to the properties of another confirmational *huh*, is also syntactically conditioned. Overall, we argue that a syntactic approach to both simple and complex tags can account for their functions and modulate the interaction of tag and host clause.

In the following sections, we give a brief overview of previous analysis of *eh* (Section 2) and summarize the lessons we can learn from these analysis (Section 3). We then introduce our proposal of a syntactic analysis (Section 3) and show how it can explain its distribution (Section 4). We also

show that the syntactic analysis of *eh* and other tags must be complex, because tags are sensitive to the knowledge state of both the speaker and the addressee (Section 6). The resulting account provides the means to differentiate the contexts in which tags, such as *eh* and *huh*, are used (Section 7).

1. What people say about *eh*

The confirmational *eh* is a “quintessential Canadian English stereotype” (Denis 2013, p. 1). Unlike many other discourse markers, *eh* is much talked and thought about by non-linguists, as can be witnessed in a discussion on Yahoo questions.¹ The points raised there are very much in line with what the scholarship on *eh* reveals. Some people wonder: why do Canadians use *eh* so frequently? That’s at least a perception that has led to the design of various merchandise for tourists featuring the *eh*-word. Though as some of the responses indicate, *eh* is actually not as frequent in Canadian English as its reputation would make us believe. For example, in their study on Toronto English, Denis & Tagliamonte (2016, p. 97) find that *eh* is used in only 6 percent of the cases in which tags are used, competing with other tags such as *right*, *you know*, and *yeah*. Since the 1960’s, its use has even declined. This decline may be rooted in the fact that *eh* is associated with uneducated, lower class, rural speech (Gold & Tremblay 2006, p. 255). Moreover, *eh* is also remarked to be not restricted to Canadian English. That is, while some have indeed viewed it as a marker of Canadian English (Avis, 1957), it was noted early on that *eh* is found in other Englishes as well. For this reason, it was not included in Avis’ (1967) *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*. This omission was something Avis had to defend. That is, Avis (1972) specifically argues that *eh* isn’t a Canadianism since it is found in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa. In fact, New Zealanders, like Canadians, claim that the use of *eh* is quintessentially “Kiwi” (Meyerhoff 1994, p. 367). And interestingly, a similar stigma is attached to its use. In fact, according to Meyerhoff (1994, p. 367), the used of “*eh was considered exceedingly vulgar, almost as shocking as a swear word.*”

Hence neither is *eh* frequent, nor is it restricted to Canadian English. So how did it get its reputation? The answer to this question lies—we submit—in the fact that, in Canadian English, *eh* is associated with a variety of functions including some that are not attested in other Englishes. Thus, Avis

¹<https://ca.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20060704105109AAAnY4MZ>.

(1972, p. 95) states that “*it seems certain that in Canada eh? has been pressed into service in contexts where it would be unfamiliar elsewhere.*” Specifically, he argues that the so-called *narrative eh* and the *exclamatory eh* are restricted to Canadian English. Roughly, the *narrative eh* is used “*to check that the listener is following*” (Fee et al., 2017). Crucially, in this use it does not request a response from the addressee, as can be witnessed by the fact that it is not restricted to turn-final position. This can be seen in (2).

- (2) He’s holding on to a fire hose, eh? The thing is jumping all over the place, eh, and he can hardly hold onto it, eh? Well, he finally loses control of it, eh, and the water knocks down half a dozen bystanders (Avis 1972, p. 103).

As for the *exclamatory eh*, Avis (1972, p. 99) provides the example in (3). While many confirmationals are typically used to request confirmation for the truth of an utterance, this cannot be the case in (3): the exclamation *how about that* transcends truth.

- (3) How about that, eh?

Interestingly, other tags that are sometimes treated as being equivalent to *eh*, such as *right* or *huh*, are not acceptable in either (2) or (3). The *narrative* and *exclamatory* use of *eh* cannot be simply substituted by them.

The use of *eh* in these contexts does not fit the core paraphrase that most people assume for *eh* (and which comes across in the Yahoo answer quotes above): it is perceived as a request to confirm the truth. And hence these uses of *eh* stand out as unexpected.

The fame of *eh*, as well as the misconceptions associated with it, tell an interesting story about these tags. Speakers are aware of their use, especially if they depart from what is expected. This means that naïve speakers have expectations about the context of use of these exotic tags, even if their meaning is elusive. Moreover, the fact that there is variation in the use of *eh* across different dialects is evidence for its grammatical status.

So, what are the functions of *eh* in Canadian English and elsewhere? In the next subsection, we give a brief overview of the scholarship on *eh*.

2. What we can learn from the literature on *eh*

There is a small but still significant literature that deals with the many functions of *eh*. It is revealing to take stock of the types of *eh* different scholars have identified. They are summarized in Table 0-1.²

Table 0-1: The functions of *eh* as reported in the literature

Function/Type/ Context	Example
(Reinforcement of) exclamation	<i>Gee, what a night, eh?</i> †‡§ ¹
(Reinforcement of) imperative/command	<i>Listen, Harry, phone me before you go out tonight, eh?</i> †‡§ ¹
Reinforcement of interrogative - wh-question - wh-question (rhetorical) - yes/no-Q - yes/no-Q (rhetorical)	<i>And who is to look after the horses, eh?</i> † ¹ <i>What are you trying to say, eh?</i> ‡§ <i>How about that, eh?</i> ‡ <i>Did that seem all right, eh?</i> ‡§ <i>Isn't that a corker, eh?</i> ‡
Declarative - opinion - fact	<i>I suppose you are a smart fellow, eh?</i> † ¹ <i>Nice day, eh?</i> † ¹ <i>It goes over here, eh?</i> † ¹
Fixed expression	<i>Thanks, eh?</i> ¹
Insult	<i>You're a real snob, eh?</i> ¹
Accusation	<i>You took the last piece, eh?</i> ¹
Affirmation and confirmation	<i>He's pretty intelligent, eh?</i> † ¹
Checking	(No example provided) [¶]
Force/strength of statement	<i>Wow (in high pitched voice) ridiculous eh?</i> ¶ ¹
Politeness (includes prod, encouragement, softener)	<i>S: I think if you look like you're taking the piss out of the whole thing <, > then it won't be appreciated very much eh</i> <i>H: Yeah</i> <i>S: But if you just show a humorous aspect of yourself with some cutting</i>

² For each example, † denotes Avis (1972), ‡ denotes Love (1973), § denotes Gibson (1976), ¹ denotes Gold and Tremblay (2006), and ¶ denotes Columbus (2010).

	<i>satire on a on a level</i> [¶]
Stylistic (includes narrative, new topic, sarcasm)	<i>B: You should have listed some <, > something socially relevant and most in thing</i> <i>C: Eh do you think uh <, > the <,, > funds that they are collecting for the earthquake is real worth of <, ></i> [¶]
Equivalent of tag question - reversed polarity - constant polarity	<i>The sun is too hot, eh?</i> <i>That should be okay, eh?</i> ^{†§} <i>A: He said “eh” twice.</i> <i>B: Oh, he said “eh”, eh?</i> [§]
Negative example of equivalent to tag	<i>You won't, eh?</i> [†]
Narrative/anecdotal <i>eh</i>	<i>Jesus, the old Deacon, eh—getting off that hot one about the Mayor, eh?</i> ^{†§¶}
Request for repetition/pardon	<i>“Eh?” said grandfather Pinner curving his hand over one ear.</i> ^{†§¶}
Occurring elsewhere than sentence final	<i>A bit too well-eh, Josey?</i> [†]

There are a number of observations we can make about this list of functions. First, there is significant, but not complete, overlap among scholars relative to the functions they identify. Let us first talk about the types of *eh* where scholars agree, i.e., those identified by more than one researcher. There is the fact that one can classify *eh* by the clause type of the host clause: declarative, interrogative, imperative, or exclamative. However, there is no consensus as to whether the grammatical clause type term (ending in *-ive*), as in Love (1973), or the corresponding speech act type (opinion/fact, question, command or exclamation), as in Gold & Tremblay (2006), is used. Some scholars are inconsistent, and use the clause type-based term for some and the speech-act-based term for other instances (Avis, 1972; Gibson, 1976). This reflects the general difficulties in determining the mapping between clause type and speech act type (or illocutionary force). Thus the literature on *eh* raises the question as to which aspect of the utterance the tag associates with.

The fact that the classification of the type of *eh* correlates with properties of the host clause indicates that the host clause plays a role in the function of *eh*: if the host clause is a declarative, then the type of *eh* is also

viewed as a declarative, if the host clause is an interrogative, the type of *eh* is also viewed as a type of interrogative or question, etc.

Next we turn to the difference between classifying the function of *eh* via the force of the host clause itself (Love, 1973; Gibson, 1976) or as its *reinforcement* (Avis, 1972). Without an explicit definition or criterion for *reinforcement*, it is difficult to assess the validity of this classification. However, it is clear that adding the confirmational changes the felicity conditions of the host sentence, but whether this change is a reinforcement is questionable. To see this, consider Contexts 0-1 and 0-2 below along with the data in (4) and (5). The host sentence by itself (*What a surprise!*) is an exclamative, which is felicitous only if the speaker wishes to express their surprise. Hence, the bare exclamative is only well-formed in Context 0-1 where Charlie expresses his surprise. In contrast, the bare exclamative is not well-formed in , because Anne, as the organizer of the surprise party, is not surprised. Hence her utterance of (4) would violate the sincerity conditions on exclamatives. If however, the exclamative is followed by the confirmational *eh* as in (5), the situation is reversed: it is well-formed in Context 0-2, but not in Context 0-1. Evaluations of the examples reflect their naturalness (✓) or unnaturalness (*) in the specific context (C_n). We adopt this style of presentation from Thoma (2017).

Context 0-1: Anne has organized a surprise party for Charlie.



Charlie enters the room and utters...

(4) <✓, C1>, <*, C2> What a surprise!

Context 0-2: Anne has organized a surprise party for Charlie.



Charlie enters the room and Anne utters...

(5) <*.C1>, <✓.C2> What a surprise, eh?

This indicates that the confirmational cannot serve to *reinforce* the exclamative. If it did, then Anne, who is not surprised, should not be able to utter (5), contrary to fact. To the contrary, it appears that with the addition of the confirmational, the host clause is no longer used as an exclamation. Instead, its interpretation can roughly be paraphrased as *Confirm that you would utter this exclamative*. This suggests then that the classification of *eh* has to be revised to distinguish between two classificatory criteria:

- i) classification based on the clause type of the host clause
- ii) classification based on the interpretation that results from adding the confirmational

The observation that the host clause contributes to the function of *eh* also accounts for the sub-classification of declarative *eh* into a statement of fact (*It goes over here, eh?*) and statement of opinion (*Nice day, eh?*). Note that the host clauses themselves are distinguished in this way: *it goes over here* is a statement of fact, while *nice day* is a statement of opinion. The difference correlates with the presence of a predicate of taste (*nice*), which gives rise to a subjective judgment (Stephenson, 2007). But again, contrary to the description in the literature, the utterance containing the confirmational is no longer interpreted as a statement; instead it is interpreted as a request for confirmation: the speaker invites the addressee to agree with the propositional content of the host clause. Hence it corresponds to the functions Columbus (2010) uses to classify tags, namely *confirmation* and *checking*, which belong to the second type of

classification criterion. This is another difference between *eh* and complex tags: the target of confirmation.

The same is true for most of Columbus' (2010) classification criteria: force/strength of statement, politeness, and stylistic. These are effects that result from the addition of the tag. However, unlike *confirmation*, which is a direct and obligatory result of adding the tag, politeness is an indirect result, which arises only in some contexts. This is clear from the fact that *eh* can be part of an insult (Gold & Tremblay, 2006), and adding it doesn't make the insult more polite.

- (6) a. You are a f..... idiot!
 b. You are a f..... idiot, eh?

In some contexts, the use of a confirmational is interpreted as more polite because of its direct effect, namely to *request* confirmation. Such a request avoids imposing information onto the addressee. Rather than telling the addressee what is the case, a confirmational allows the speaker to request confirmation for what is the case, giving the addressee a chance to acknowledge that they already know it. According to Johnson (1976, p. 158), these indirect functions arise in the following way:

The general conversational function of *eh*, therefore, is to question the situational assumptions associated with different speech acts, thereby showing that these assumptions are held in a weak rather than a strong form. In this way, a speaker can avoid an attitude of officiousness and at the same time avoid unfriendly formality. For example, the situational assumptions of a command include that the speaker is in a position to issue the command, and the hearer disposed to comply.

These indirect secondary effects have contributed to the description of tags as being characteristic of powerless speech (O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), and at the same time as strong markers of interpersonal affiliation (Holmes, 1984; Cameron et al., 1988).

Another criterion used for the classification of types of *eh* involves comparison with a functionally equivalent construction, namely a full tag question (Avis, 1972; Gibson, 1976). While these tag questions come in two varieties (reverse vs. constant polarity), which are associated with two distinct functions, the invariant tag *eh* can be used for both these functions. Reverse polarity tags are used if the speaker is biased towards believing the proposition, while the constant polarity tag is used if the speaker assumes that the addressee is biased towards believing the proposition. *Eh* can be used in both of these cases, though with slightly different effects.

Another completely different criterion for classification is based on linear ordering. Specifically, Avis (1972) lists, for one of the types of *eh*, the fact that it can occur elsewhere than in sentence-final position. There are—unsurprisingly—only very restricted uses of this type of *eh*; by definition, confirmationals are used to request confirmation and hence are restricted not only to a sentence-final, but rather to a turn-final position. The example given by Avis has *eh* followed by a vocative of address (*A bit too well-eh, Josey?*), and hence is compatible with marking the end of the turn.

All of the types of *eh* discussed thus far fall under the broad category “request for confirmation.” They differ depending on the type of the host clause and may have different indirect effects depending on the context. There are, however, two special uses of *eh*, which fall outside the broad category of requesting confirmation. This is the *narrative*, or *anecdotal*, *eh* (Avis, 1972; Gibson, 1976; Gold & Tremblay, 2006), which is used even in contexts where no response is expected, and is hence not restricted to turn-final position. And finally, *eh* can also be used as a request for repetition and hence is equivalent to *pardon*. However, this use is much less frequent (Gold 2008), especially among young speakers of Canadian English (Wiltschko, Denis & D’Arcy, 2018). The classification criteria for the different types of *eh* are summarized in Table 0-2.

Table 0-2: Classifying *eh*

Classification based on...	Function/Type/Context
...content of host clause	(Reinforcement of) exclamation
	(Reinforcement of) imperative/command
	Reinforcement of interrogative
	Declarative (statement of opinion or fact)
	Fixed expression
	Insult
	Accusation
...direct result of adding confirmational	Affirmation and confirmation
	Checking
...indirect result of adding confirmational	Force/strength of statement
	Politeness (includes prod, encouragement, softener)
	Stylistic (includes narrative, new topic, sarcasm)
...equivalent construction	Equivalent of a tag question reversed polarity constant polarity

	Negative example of equivalent to tag
...linear positioning	Occurring elsewhere than sentence final
...special use	Narrative/anecdotal <i>eh</i>
	Request for repetition/pardon

This classification of the types of *eh* is essential for the comparison of *eh* across different speakers and dialects (and ultimately for cross-linguistic comparison across languages). There are several comparative studies of *eh* across different Englishes. Scargill & Warkentyne (1972) conduct the first extensive study on Canadian English, surveying the use of *eh* as a request for repetition or as a request for confirmation.³ According to their findings, the use of *eh* is similar across the ten provinces of Canada; the *pardon eh*, however, is more frequent in Quebec. Gold suggests that this might be due to the influence of Canadian French *hein* (Gold, 2008).

A more fine-grained comparison of the use of *eh* in Ottawa and Vancouver English (conducted in 1980) and Toronto (added in 2014) is summarized in Gold (2008) (see Table 0-3). The results show that the frequency of *eh* differs across different uses and across the three regions. For example, in all three, the frequency is the highest after an exclamation (*What a game, eh*), and/or after a statement of opinion (*Nice day, eh?*). Interestingly, the fixed expression (*Thanks, eh*) is highly frequent in Toronto, but is the least frequent, or non-existent, in Vancouver and Ottawa.

Table 0-3: Results of the Ottawa, Vancouver, and Toronto Survey (Gold, 2008, 103, Table 8)

	Toronto	Ottawa	Vancouver
	%	%	%
Nice day, eh?	78	72	39
What a game, eh?	73	73	45
Oh, you're still here, eh?	n/a	64	45
Thanks, eh?	53	n/a	9
Think about it, eh?	46	52	34
Eh? What did you say?	39	43	13
It goes over here, eh?	34	58	29
What are they trying to do, eh?	26	15	15
This guy is up on the 27th floor, eh?...	16	6	13
Average (7 questions in common)	45	46	27

³ Scargill labels this use of *eh* as observation *eh*, because it requests confirmation for the truth of a current observation by the speaker (*So that's what he thinks, eh*). Gold (2008) suggests that this use falls under the label equivalent to tag.

A comparison of the use of *eh* between New Zealand English and Canadian English is conducted in Columbus (2010). Again, as summarized in Table 0-4, we observe the same types of differences: the use of *eh* differs across dialects and across different types of *eh*.

Table 0-4: The New Zealand *eh* vs. the Canadian *eh*

Meaning	NZE <i>eh</i>	%	Meaning	CanE <i>eh</i>	%
Post opinion/ statement	116	19.5	Emphatic	29	20.3
Emphatic	103	17.3	Post opinion/ statement	26	18.2
Narrative	81	13.6	Narrative	17	11.9
Confirmation check	75	12.6	Confirmation check	17	11.9
Comment prev statement	53	8.9	Sarcasm/Humour	14	9.8
Affirmation prev statement	47	7.9	Affirmation prev statement	13	9.1
Pardon	22	3.7	Check question	8	5.6
Check question	21	3.5	Unclear	5	3.5
Softener	15	2.5	New topic	3	2.1
Suggestion	15	2.5	Pardon	3	2.1
Sarcasm/Humour	14	2.4	Suggestion	3	2.1
Empathetic	11	1.8	Really?/Check question	2	1.4
TUE	9	1.5	Comment prev statement	1	0.7
Affirmation: emphatic	7	1.2	Empathetic	1	0.7
New topic	4	0.7	TUE	1	0.7
Exclamation/Emphatic	2	0.3	Affirmation: emphatic	0	0.0
Really?/Check question	0	0.0	Exclamation/Emphatic	0	0.0
Unclear	0	0.0	Softener	0	0.0
Total	595		Total	143	

Another difference between the Canadian *eh* and the New Zealand *eh* has to do with intonation. The Canadian *eh* is typically realized with a rising intonation (with the exception of the narrative *eh*; see Section 7), whereas the New Zealand *eh* is realized with a falling intonation (Meyerhoff, 1994).

We submit that mixing different types of functions (e.g., direct vs. indirect functions) makes it difficult to classify the different uses of *eh*. For example, *eh* can simultaneously be used as a request for confirmation, and can, in this function, also serve as a marker of politeness. This mixing of different types of functions as well as the lack of clear criteria for classification makes it impossible to systematically compare different instances of *eh*. This holds for a comparison between different uses of *eh* as well as a comparison between *eh* and other confirmationals.

3. A syntactic analysis of *eh*

Before our formal analysis of *eh* (Heim et al., 2016; Wiltschko & Heim, 2016), confirmationals had not received attention in the syntactic literature. This has to do with the fact that *eh* is—at least at first sight—syntactically

uninteresting and uncontroversial: it is a simplex form (a particle) and it seems to have a fixed distribution at the end of the utterance. Nevertheless, we submit that for a proper comparison of confirmationals, a formal syntactic analysis is required. In addition, a syntactic analysis is independently supported by several facts.

First, despite its sentence-final position, there are still some ordering restrictions associated with it. Consider, for example, the interaction between *eh* and the politeness marker *please* in imperatives, as in (7).⁴ In this context, *eh* has to follow *please* (7), but cannot precede it (7).

- (7) a. Get me a beer please!
 b. Get me a beer please, eh?
 c. *Get me a beer, eh please?

One might argue that this ordering restriction can be captured by a prosodic constraint: suppose *eh* is restricted to sentence-final position. This restriction could be specified over linear order and would not require a syntactic analysis. However, *eh* is not always restricted to sentence-final position. As we have seen above, Avis (1972) points out that *eh* can be followed by vocatives. Another instance of a vocative following *eh* is given in (8). Hence, we can conclude that an analysis purely in terms of linear order will not suffice: *eh* is not restricted to sentence-final position. In fact, if *eh* follows the vocative, the sentence is degraded, as in (8).

- (8) a. You have a new dog, eh Bob?
 b. *?You have a new dog, Bob eh?

Thus, if we assume that ordering restrictions are to be analyzed syntactically, we can conclude that a proper analysis of *eh* has to involve syntax.

Second, despite its sentence-peripheral position, *eh* is nevertheless prosodically integrated into the utterance; there is no prosodic break. Assuming that syntax is the module where linearization, prosody, and interpretive function interact, we have to conclude that *eh*, too, is part of syntax. This is also consistent with the assumption of Wiltschko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis according to which the function of UoL's is partly determined by their position along the syntactic spine. On this view,

⁴ There are (at least) two types of *please* with different distributional and interpretive properties. One serves as a marker of illocutionary force and one serves as a politeness marker (see Woods (2005) for a syntactic analysis).

if variant tags, as in (9), receive a syntactic analysis, and if their pragmatic function is (in part) a function of their syntax, then confirmational of the invariant kind, which have a similar function, should receive the same analysis.

(9) Get me a beer, won't you?

Finally, the fact that *eh* is a sentence-final particle does not immediately rule out a syntactic analysis. There are languages in which sentence final particles are part of the proposition in that they express tense and aspect (see Erlewine (2017) for a recent discussion of sentence-final particles).

We take these arguments to establish that the proper analysis of *eh* will include a syntactic component. Specifically, we argue that *eh* is hosted by the syntactic structure dedicated to hosting interactional language (Wiltschko, in preparation). Specifically, according to Wiltschko & Heim (2016) there are two articulated layers above the propositional structure (CP): a GroundP whose function is to encode the interlocutors' attitudes towards the proposition; and a Resp(onse)P whose function is to regulate turn-taking. Specifically, it is used to host elements that call on the addressee to provide a response to the current utterance. We adopt the notion of Grounding for the complex speech act structure (GroundP and RespP) from Bavelas *et al.* (2012:5) who define Grounding as the “*fundamental, moment-by-moment conversational process by which speaker and addressee are constantly establishing mutual understanding.*”.

To analyze *eh* then, we assume that *eh* associates with GroundP to indicate that the propositional content of the sentence (S) is in the speaker's belief set (i.e., in the speaker's Ground). Moreover, we assume that the rising intonation (↑) associated with Canadian *eh* associates with RespP. It signals that the utterance is now in the response set of the addressee. The analysis of *eh* is illustrated in (10).

(10) A syntactic analysis of *eh*
 [Utterance [Grounding Structure [RespP ↑] [GroundP *eh*]] [Host clause [CP *sentence radical*]]]

In what follows, we show how the analysis in (10) makes it possible to establish clear criteria for the classification of the different uses of *eh*. We start with the role of the host clause, which, in our analysis, is the complement of GroundP (Section 5). We then continue to show how the speaker- and addressee-oriented readings come about (Section 6). We argue that GroundP is split into two layers of structure, one introducing the

speaker's Ground and the other introducing the addressee's Ground. This will allow us to understand the difference in the contexts of use between *eh* and *huh* (Section 7): *huh* does not associate with the speaker's Ground and hence does not commit the speaker to believing the proposition expressed in the host clause. Finally, we turn to the analysis of narrative *eh* in Section 8. This will provide evidence that the intonational contour has to be separated from the particle itself. With the confirmational *eh*, it is the rising contour which is responsible for the call on the addressee. The narrative *eh* has a different contour, which does not require a response, and hence the narrative *eh* is not turn-final. Thus the syntactic analysis we propose allows us to decompose *eh* into various components, each of which is independently motivated and each of which contributes different aspects of its interpretation. This allows for a systematic classification of the different functions of *eh*.

4. The role of the host clause

According to the syntactic analysis in (10), it is the complement of Ground which is asserted to be in the speaker's Ground. In this section, we show that there are no clause type restrictions on the complement of the Grounding structure. Hence, it is not only propositions that can be confirmed with the use of *eh*. Rather, speakers can confirm whether their interlocutors have the same belief, have the same question, have the same intention, and have the same reason for exclamation.

We assume that the highest propositional layer, the complement of Ground is a simple CP encoding clause-type, which we equate with grammatical clause type. In what follows, we discuss each of the clause-types in the context of the conversation-boards that illustrate the relevant context of use.

5.1 Declaratives

As a point of departure, we introduce declarative clauses with falling intonation but without *eh*. Such utterances are typically used as assertions and as such are associated with the felicity conditions summarized in (11).

- (11) a. S believes with certainty that p is true

(henceforth $\text{Bel}_{\text{certain}}(\text{S},\text{p})$).⁵

- b. S believes that A has no belief regarding the truth of p.

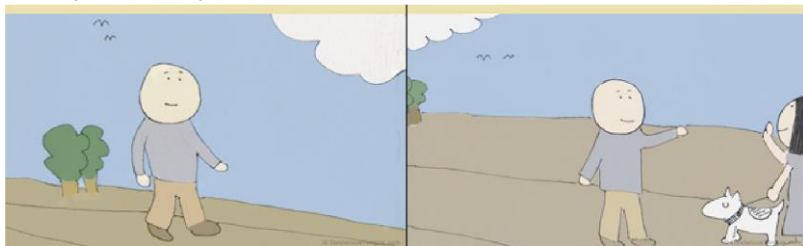
The first condition is an essential condition of the assertion itself, and hence cannot be denied, as in (12). The second condition comes about via assumptions about the normal course of a conversation, and hence can be denied, as in (12).

- (12) a. He's guilty. *I don't believe that.
b. He's guilty. You probably know that already.

If these two conditions on the epistemic states of the interlocutors are met, then an assertion is well-formed. It can be used by the speaker to propose that the addressee adopt the belief that the proposition is true (with certainty).

But declaratives do not always map onto assertions. For example, when the confirmational *eh* is added, then the felicity conditions change. Below, we give a storyboard used (Burton & Matthewson, 2015) to elicit a declarative clause hosting *eh*, resulting in a request to confirm the truth of the proposition. In this context a declarative followed by *eh* is well-formed, as in (13), while a bare declarative with a falling intonation is ill-formed, as in (13).

Context 0-3: Mary has a new dog, which John doesn't know about. As Mary is walking her new dog, she runs into John.



After greeting Mary, John, slightly surprised about her dog, utters...

⁵ We distinguish degrees of epistemic certainty here associated with the propositional attitude *belief*. For the present purpose, it is irrelevant whether we refer to “belief with certainty” as knowledge. For ease of exposition, I will consistently use the propositional attitude *belief* to talk about epistemic states.

- (13) a. <✓,C3> You have a new dog, **eh**?
 b. <*,C3> You have a new dog.

This shows that declaratives followed by *eh* do not have the same felicity conditions as bare declaratives with a falling intonation. Rather, as Context 0-3 illustrates, *eh*-declaratives differ in two ways, one concerning the epistemic states of the interlocutors, the other concerning the expectation for a response. As for the former, the addition of *eh* indicates that S does not believe with certainty that the proposition is true. John (the speaker) didn't know that Mary has a new dog. Just prior to the conversation he witnesses Mary with a dog and forms an (uncertain) belief that she may indeed have a dog. As for the addressee (Mary), the speaker has good reason to assume that she knows whether or not she has a dog. Interestingly, in the case of *eh*, both conditions are essential properties of the utterance and cannot be denied, as shown in (14).

- (14) a. You have a new dog, **eh**? *I don't really believe it.
 b. You have a new dog, **eh**? *You probably don't know either.

The fact that the belief state of A (as perceived by S) is an essential part of the utterance suggests that it must somehow be encoded. We return to this issue in Section 5.

The bare declarative in (13) requires a somewhat marked context of use: speakers don't usually inform their addressees about states of affairs that concern the addressee. A context where this is possible is illustrated in Context 0-4. Here, the epistemic states required for a bare declarative hold: S believes *p* with certainty, and she believes that A does not hold the belief that *p*. And indeed, as shown in (15), the bare declarative is well-formed but the *eh*-declarative is not.

Context 0-4: Peter has wanted a new dog for a while but couldn't make up his mind. His friend Betty takes fate into her hand and gets him a rescue dog.



As she hands the dog to him she utters...

- (15) a. <✓.C4> Surprise! You have a new dog.
 b. <*.C4> Surprise! You have a new dog, eh?

There are two lessons we can learn from declaratives. First, there is no one-to-one mapping from clause type (declarative) to speech act type (assertion). Bare declaratives are used as assertions: they are used to inform the addressee of the truth of the proposition. *Eh*-declaratives differ. They are used to request confirmation for the truth of the proposition: *eh* serves to assert that the content of the embedded clause—the proposition—is in the speaker's Ground, whereas the rising intonation requests a response from the addressee. This analysis is illustrated in (16).

- (16) the syntax of *eh*-declaratives
 [Utterance [Grounding Structure [RespP ↑] [GroundP(Speaker) *eh*]] [Host
 clause [CP DECLARATIVE]]]

The question that arises in this context is how speaker uncertainty comes about. That is, unlike what we observe with bare declaratives, which typically encode belief with certainty, the use of *eh* seems to encode a degree of uncertainty that warrants the request for a response. We propose that there is no direct encoding of the degree of certainty associated with the confirmational *eh*. It is not part of the lexical entry of *eh*. Rather, it is merely a matter of compatibility with context: all that is required is that the proposition be part of the speaker's Ground, but not to what degree of certainty this is the case. This analysis correctly predicts that *eh* can be used

even in contexts when the speaker holds the belief that *p* with full certainty, as is the case with narrative *eh* (see Section 7 for further discussion). This further suggests that the uncertainty of the belief comes about by means of requesting a response through the rising intonation. Assuming that the goal of a conversation is to settle the question under discussion, uncertainty has to be resolved. We can therefore conclude that a request for response implies uncertainty.

5.2 Interrogatives

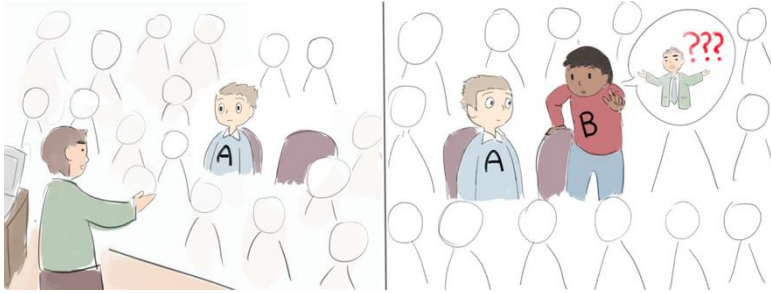
As we have seen based on the literature review above, *eh* can follow interrogatives, both polar interrogatives (17) and *wh*-interrogatives (18).

- (17) a. And who is to look after the horses, *eh*?
 b. What are you trying to say, *eh*?
 c. How about that, *eh*? (Avis, 1972)
- (18) a. Did that seem alright, *eh*?
 b. Isn't that a corker, *eh*? (Love, 1973)

While the *eh*-interrogative is still interpreted as a request for confirmation, it cannot be a request for the truth of the proposition or a belief about *p*, because interrogatives do not denote propositions with simple truth conditions. Unfortunately, the examples above are not embedded in a conversational context, and hence the precise interpretation is hard to determine.

To establish the relevant felicity conditions for *eh*-interrogatives, we first have to determine those for bare interrogatives. Consider Context 0-5, which licenses bare interrogatives, as in (19), but not *eh*-interrogatives, as in (19).

Context 0-5: Andy is in a public lecture, waiting for his friend Bob, who is late. As Bob arrives, half-way into the lecture, he wants Andy to summarize the content of the lecture thus far. Bob utters:



- (19) a. <v.C5> What's he talking about?
 b. <*.C5> What's he talking about, eh?

Here, S (Bob) expects A (Andy) to have an answer to his question. This is precisely when bare interrogatives are well-formed. *Eh*-interrogatives differ. The interpretation of the latter can roughly be paraphrased as *Confirm that you have the same question*, and hence *eh*-interrogatives are illicit in information-seeking contexts: *eh*-interrogatives are not interpreted as real questions. To see this lack of a question interpretation, consider a context that licenses an *eh*-interrogative, such as Context 0-6.

Context 0-6: Andy and Bethany are in a public lecture. The lecture is rather obscure and Andy is not following though he doesn't think it's his fault. Judging from Bethany's face he determines that she also doesn't understand (or much like) the lecture. Andy utters...



- (20) a. <v.C6> What's he talking about?
 b. <v.C6> What's he talking about, eh?

Interestingly, as shown in (20), both a bare interrogative and an *eh*-interrogative can be felicitously used in this context. However, given that

Andy knows that Bethany also does not understand the talk, this question is not meant to elicit an answer: it is a rhetorical question.

So what is being confirmed in an *eh*-interrogative? We assume that what is confirmed is the fact that there is a set of possible propositions available (this follows Hamblin's (1973) classic analysis of questions as denoting sets of propositions, which count as possible answers to the question). The felicity conditions for interrogatives (including rhetorical interrogatives and *eh*-interrogatives) include two components: first, the speaker's propositional attitude relates to a set of disjoint propositions. This is an essential part of the utterance. Second, it is part of the assumptions about the normal course of a conversation that the speaker will only ask questions of addressees who they believe have an answer. That this is not an essential part of the utterance is evidenced by the existence of rhetorical questions, which can be uttered even if S does not assume that A has an answer.

In contrast, with *eh*-interrogatives, the assumptions about A's belief state is an essential part of the utterance: S assumes that A's belief state is also about a set of disjoint propositions. In other words, the speaker assumes that the addressee has the same questions. The syntactic analysis of *eh*-interrogatives is given in (21).

- (21) The syntax of *eh*-interrogatives
 [Utterance [Grounding Structure [RespP ↑] [GroundP(Addressee) *eh*]] [Host
 clause [CP *INTERROGATIVE*]]]

5.3 Imperatives

As we saw above, *eh* can be hosted by imperative clauses, as in (22) taken from Avis (1972).

- (22) Listen, Harry, phone me before you go out tonight, eh?

Again, with the use of *eh*, the utterance is interpreted as a request for confirmation. And just as was the case with interrogatives, it cannot be about confirming the truth of a proposition. The example above does not give any contextual information, so it is hard to know what precisely the function of the utterance would be. As with the other clause-types, we use storyboards to set up the context. Consider first Context 0-7.

Context 0-7: Billy and Alfred are frat boys.



Billy is a bit of a bully, and Andy a bit of a pushover. As Billy is sitting on the couch watching a movie, Andy comes in, sits down on the couch and tells Billy that he's so tired and doesn't want to leave the couch anymore. Billy is used to his roommates serving him beer. So he says to Andy....

- (23) a. <✓.C7> Get me a beer!
 b. <*.C7> Get me a beer, eh?

In this context, bare imperatives are well-formed whereas *eh*-imperatives are not. This contrasts with Context 0-8, which yields the opposite judgements.

Context 0-8: Boris and Annabelle are relaxing on the couch watching a movie.



Annabelle gets up to go to the kitchen as she usually does during commercials. And she usually brings Boris a beer. Just to make sure that Annabelle is indeed planning on bringing Boris a beer, he utters ...

- (24) a. <*.C8> Get me a beer!
 b. <✓.C8.> Get me a beer, eh?

If S has reason to believe that A already has the intention of carrying out the activity denoted by the imperative, then the bare imperative is not

felicitous (24), whereas the *eh*-imperative is. This is consistent with the expected contribution of *eh*. In particular, *eh* was used here to express a request for confirmation from the addressee. For declaratives, the target of confirmation was a declarative denotation (i.e., a proposition), and for interrogatives, the target of confirmation was an interrogative denotation (i.e., a set of propositions). Now, we expect that the target of confirmation for imperatives would be an imperative denotation. So what do imperatives denote? For declaratives and interrogatives, the literature is quite unified in assuming that we are dealing with propositions and the propositional attitude of *belief*. The literature on imperatives is much more diverse. For the purpose of this paper, we follow (Charlow, 2014; Harris, 2017) in assuming that imperatives denote intentions. Specifically, we assume that the utterance of an imperative serves to express the speaker's intention for the addressee to engage in the activity denoted by the imperative clause. For bare imperatives, assumptions about the addressee's intention are not an essential part of their meaning. This contrasts with *eh*-imperatives, in which the speaker's assumption that A is intending to perform the activity is an essential part of its meaning.

Evidence that *eh*-imperatives differ from bare imperatives, in that S believes that A already has the intention to perform the activity, comes from the following examples. The continuation which explicitly denies S's belief that A intends to perform the activity is well-formed with bare imperatives (25), but not with *eh*-imperatives (25).

- (25) a. Get me a beer!
 (I know you don't want to, but you will anyways)
 b. Get me a beer, eh?
 (*I know you don't want to, but you will anyways)

Furthermore, this difference between bare imperatives and *eh*-imperatives allows us to make sense of the contrast between (23) and (24). In (23), the context is such that the addressee has declared that they have no intention to get up from the couch, hence the *eh*-imperative is not well-formed, whereas the bare imperative is. In contrast, in (24), S has reason to believe that A is intending to get S a beer. This is what is being confirmed here: the speaker's assumption about the addressee's intention. The analysis of *eh*-imperatives is given in (26).

- (26) The syntax of *eh*-imperatives

[Utterance [Grounding Structure [RespP ↑] [GroundP(Addressee) *eh*]] [Host
clause [CP IMPERATIVE]]]

According to this analysis, the use of *eh* with imperatives indicates that the imperative denotation (roughly the speaker's intention for the addressee to perform the action) is in the speaker's Ground. This is consistent with what we have seen thus far: it is the denotation of the complement of Ground, which determines the target of confirmation. When the complement is a declarative, what is confirmed is a belief; when it is an interrogative, what is confirmed is a question; and when it is an imperative, what is confirmed is an intention. However, what the analysis in (26) does not yet capture is that the speaker wants to confirm something about the addressee's intention. We will discuss the issue of distinguishing between confirming propositional content, the speaker's attitude, or the addressee's attitude in Section 5. The need to distinguish S- and A-oriented attitude confirmation is also evident from exclamatives, to which we turn next.

5.4 Exclamatives

The last speech-act type we discuss here is that of an exclamation. Not every language has a dedicated exclamative clause-type. In English, exclamations can be formed with an initial *wh*-phrase, but unlike interrogatives, they do not invert the auxiliary over the subject. Moreover, in many cases, the exclamative simply consists of a *wh*-phrase alone, as indicated by the brackets in (27).

(27) What a great game (that was)!

The special properties of exclamatives justify their treatment as a dedicated clause-type, though other clause-types can be used as exclamations, given the proper intonational tune or an appropriate exclamation marker such as *wow* or *man* (Rett, 2017; McCready, 2008).

(28) {Wow, Man}, That was a great game!

In Section 2, we have already seen that *eh* can follow exclamatives. The example from Avis (1972) is repeated below as (29).

(29) Gee, what a night, eh?

While the traditional classification in the literature has it that, in this context, *eh* serves as a reinforcement marker, we have already seen that this cannot be right. Specifically, a bare exclamative is used when the speaker is surprised at the degree to which the propositional content holds. In other words, to use an exclamative, the speaker has to be surprised, as in Context 0-9 repeated from above. In contrast, with *eh*-exclamatives the speaker need not be surprised, as in Context 0-10. Instead, the *eh*-exclamative is used to confirm that the addressee is surprised. This is evidenced by the judgements in (30).

Context 0-9: Anne has organized a surprise party for Charlie. Charlie enters the room and utters...



Context 0-10: Anne has organized a surprise party for Charlie.



Charlie enters the room and Anne utters...

- (30) a. <✓,C9>, <*,C10> What a surprise!
 b. <*,C9>, <✓,C10> What a surprise, eh?

The difference between bare exclamatives and *eh*-exclamatives is consistent with the expected contribution of *eh*: *eh* is used to express a request for confirmation from the addressee. The target of confirmation is (in part) determined by the host clause, as we have seen. Now, we expect

that the target of confirmation for an exclamative would be an exclamative denotation. So what do exclamatives denote?

Following pioneering work by Elliott (1974), the literature on exclamatives typically identifies several ingredients that make up the interpretation of an exclamative: i) high degree, ii) emotional content, and iii) factivity. That is, with the use of an exclamative, a speaker expresses their heightened emotional state (e.g., surprise) towards the propositional content of the utterance, which in turn is presupposed—hence factive. That these are the essential ingredients of an exclamative is widely acknowledged. However, how to analyze them is controversial (see Villalva (2008) for an extensive literature overview). The denotation of an exclamative is often equated with that of an interrogative; i.e., they are assumed to denote a set of propositions (Gutiérrez-Reach, 1996; Abels, 2004; d’Avis, 2002; Sæbø, 2005; Zanuttini & Portner, 2003). This immediately explains the fact that the two clause types are similar in their formal properties (the possible use of an initial *wh*-word). Exclamatives have the added requirement that some of the propositions in this set are considered surprising in a given context (Zanuttini & Portner, 2003). In addition, the difference between the two clause types is typically attributed to a difference in illocutionary force. For example, according to Gutierrez-Rexach (1996), exclamatives are introduced by an illocutionary exclamative operator, which in turn includes a null emotive predicate. For the present purpose it is not crucial to decide among the different analyses of exclamatives. For expository reasons, we will assume an informal and simplified analysis of exclamatives, which captures their main empirical properties.

We propose that exclamations are used when there is a change in the propositional attitude of the speaker towards a particular proposition. Specifically, exclamatives are used when the belief of the proposition has entered the speaker’s ground at the time of the conversation. In other words, we propose that the conditions for the felicitous use of an exclamation require the distinction between the speaker’s belief state at a time prior to the time of the conversation, and their belief state at the time of the conversation. Crucially, an exclamation is well-formed if, at a time prior to the time of conversation, the speaker didn’t hold the belief *P*. Rather, for an exclamative to be felicitous, the speaker has to believe that *P* is not the case. It is only at the time of the conversation that the speaker comes to hold the belief *P*. These conditions of use for exclamations derive two of its core properties: emotional content and factivity. Specifically, the fact that the speaker has a new belief licenses the expression of an emotive attitude. This follows from the system of emotions, which is characterized by three

primitives: i) appraisal (assignment of positive or negative value), ii) intensity, and iii) (un)expectedness (Ortony et al., 1988). It is the unexpectedness of the new belief which leads to the presence of emotion. This is in line with Ben-Ze'ev's (2003, p. 160) description:

Since emotions are generated at times of sudden change, unexpectedness typically generates emotions and is usually positively correlated with emotional intensity. Unexpectedness may be characterized as expressing the gap between the actual situation and the imagined alternative that we expect.

According to this description, we expect the degree of unexpectedness to correlate with the intensity of the emotions. Furthermore, Ben-Ze'ev's characterization of unexpectedness as expressing the gap between the actual situation and the imagined alternative fits well with the linguistic assumption that exclamatives denote sets of propositions. Finally, the factivity associated with exclamations is a consequence of the fact that they are only well-formed if the speaker does in fact believe the proposition. This analysis differs from previous ones, in that it does not require the postulation of an empty emotive predicate, as in Gutierrez-Rexach (1996). Rather, the emotive content follows from the contextual licensing conditions: a change in belief triggers an emotional attitude.

Now consider *eh*-exclamatives. They are not interpreted as real exclamatives. As shown in (30), *eh*-exclamatives can be uttered by a speaker who has no emotional investment. We propose that the contextual restrictions on *eh*-exclamatives are similar to those of exclamatives, except that it is now the addressee's belief that has changed (or at least that's what the speaker assumes). Specifically, an *eh*-exclamative is well-formed if the speaker has reason to believe that the addressee did not believe *p* before the time of the conversation, but has now reasons to believe *p*, and is hence surprised. Another way to paraphrase an *eh*-exclamative would be *Confirm that you would perform this exclamation*.

Everything else being equal, we expect the syntax of *eh*-exclamatives to be parallel to those of other clause types, namely as in (31).

- (31) The syntax of *eh*-exclamatives
 [Utterance [Grounding Structure [RespP ↑] [GroundP(Addressee) *eh*]] [Host
 clause [CP EXCLAMATIVE]]]

The analysis for *eh*-utterances we have developed so far captures several aspects of *eh*-utterances: they all place a request on the addressee to confirm that the content of the host clause is in the addressee's belief set. However,

there are aspects of *eh*-utterances that do not yet fall out from the proposed analysis.

5. Speaker- and addressee-oriented *eh*

In this subsection, we address the question as to how to analyze the fact that *eh* can request confirmation of the speaker's belief as well as (what the speaker assumes about) the addressee's belief. We propose that this distinction can be modeled by assuming an articulated Grounding layer: GroundP is split into a speaker-oriented and an addressee-oriented layer (Ground_{Spkr} and Ground_{Adr} respectively, as in (32)).

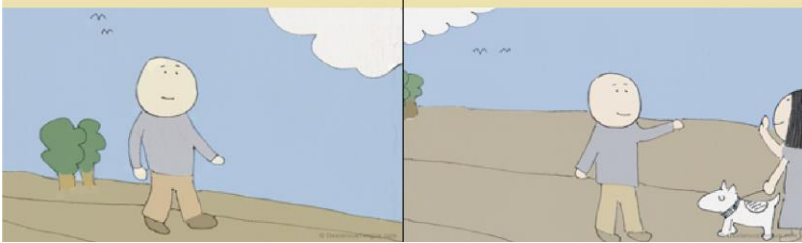
- (32) An articulated Grounding structure
 [Utterance [Grounding Structure [GroundP(Addressee) *Ground*] [GroundP(Speaker) *Ground*]] [Host clause [CP EXCLAMATIVE]]]

There are several reasons for assuming an articulated Grounding layer. Here we discuss only one, namely the fact that there is a range of possible interpretations associated with *eh*.⁶

Consider again the difference between the examples in (33) and (34) below. With the use of *eh* in (33), the speaker (John) wishes to confirm that his (newly formed) belief (that Mary has a new dog) is correct. Hence, in this context, *eh* can be paraphrased as “confirm that p is true.” Mary's response to this move is compatible with this view: she does indeed confirm the truth of p by using a positive polar response particle (*yeah*), and an explanation for why this truth holds and the reason why John would have not known about this (*I got him last week*).

Context 0-11: Mary has a new dog which John doesn't know about. As Mary is walking her new dog, she runs into John.

⁶ There are two other pieces of evidence. First, there are languages, such as Cantonese, which allow for multiple sentence-final particles, which display ordering effects: speaker-oriented tags are closer to the propositional structure than addressee-oriented ones (Lam, 2013). Second, in Cantonese, only speaker-oriented tags show selectional restrictions on the clause-type (Lam, 2013).



After greeting Mary, John, slightly surprised about her dog, utters....

- (33) <v.C11> John: You have a new dog, **eh**?
 Mary: **Yeah!** *I got him last week.*

Now consider the context in Context 0-12, and the corresponding utterance in (34). With the use of *eh*, the speaker (Mary) wishes to confirm that her interlocutor has formed the belief that she has a new dog. Here, confirmation is not about the truth of the belief, but about her assumptions about her interlocutor's beliefs. While she has reasonable ground to assume that he will have formed this belief (since she has her dog on the leash and John can see the dog). But there is, of course, a chance that he might assume that she is just walking someone else's dog. Hence, she needs to confirm that John indeed understands that she has a new dog. In this context then, *eh* can be paraphrased as "confirm that you know p." John's response to this move is compatible with this analysis. He can start his response with the negative polar response marker *no*. While this type of response marker is typically viewed as responding to the propositional content of the preceding utterance (see Section 6 for detailed discussion), in this case *no* does not deny the truth of the proposition (that Mary has a new dog). Instead, as evidenced by the following statement (*I didn't know*), in this case *no* is used as a response to the contribution of *eh* (confirm that you know).

Context 0-12: Mary runs into John with her new dog



In this context, Mary has a new dog, which John doesn't know about. She is excited to take him for a walk and to let people know about her new pet. As she is walking, she runs into John. They greet each other, but John is not mentioning the dog at all. So Mary utters, ...

- (34) < \checkmark ,C12> Mary: I have a new dog, **eh**?
 John: *No, I didn't know*

There are two crucial differences between the two contexts. First, in (33) (the confirm-that-it's-true context), the uncertainty of the speaker resides in the belief that *p*. In contrast, in (34), the confirm-that-you-know context, the uncertainty of the speaker resides in her assumption about A's belief. Second, in (33), the speaker makes no claims about their belief about the addressee's belief state.⁷ In contrast, in (34), the speaker has an (uncertain) belief about the addressee's belief state.

We propose that the difference between these two contexts is syntactically conditioned. That is, it is a difference in syntactic distribution which is responsible for the difference in interpretation. Specifically, we propose that confirming the truth of *p* comes about by associating *eh* with the Speaker-oriented Grounding layer ($\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$) where it asserts that what is said is part of the speaker's Ground. In contrast, confirming that A believes *p* comes about by associating *eh* with the higher Addressee-oriented Grounding structure ($\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$) where it asserts that what is said is in the addressee's Ground. This is schematized in (35).

⁷ This is an oversimplification. Given the context, there are good reasons for S to believe that A does in fact believe that *p*. What S assumes is that A has the authority over the proposition. After all people typically know whether the dog they are walking is theirs or not. Since S has reason to believe that *p* is true, S will also assume that A believes that *p* is true. But this is not encoded in the utterance.

than postulating a syntactic analysis that encodes this distinction. Specifically, one might argue that *eh* expresses a more general request for confirmation along the lines of *Confirm that this is an appropriate move*. If the addressee has authority over the truth of the proposition, then the result is a request for confirmation that the speaker's move is indeed appropriate, and hence (via a process of inferencing) it amounts to inquiring whether the proposition is true. In contrast, if the speaker has the authority, then the result is a request for confirmation that the addressee would initiate the same move. And since contextual considerations make it clear that the speaker really knows what they are talking about, the result is that the addressee is requested to adopt the belief.

However, this cannot be the full story. There are confirmational functions whose interpretation is restricted to only one of the interpretations available for *eh*. Consider, as mentioned earlier, the English tag *huh*. This confirmational functions like *eh* in that it allows for the confirmation of the truth of the proposition and hence it can be used in contexts where the addressee has the authority over the truth of the event, as in (38) and (40). It cannot, however, be used to request confirmation that the addressee knows p. In such contexts the use of *huh* is infelicitous, as in (39) and (40).

- (38) <✓.C11> John: You have a new dog, **huh**?
 Mary: **Yeah!** I got him last week
- (39) <*.C12> Mary: I have a new dog, **huh**?
 John: **No**, I didn't know
- (40) Context: An employee is in a conversation with their boss, after the employee made an unforgivable mistake:
- a. Employee: *I am fired, huh?*
 = confirm that p is true
- b. Boss: **You are fired, huh?*
 = confirm that you know p

The contrast between *eh* and *huh* clearly shows that we cannot simply derive the difference in interpretation associated with *eh* from contextual inferencing. If that was the case, then *huh* should behave in exactly the same way. In other words, we would not expect variation.

According to the syntactic analysis we propose, the interpretation of *eh* is conditioned by the syntactic spine. Specifically, the multi-functionality of *eh* is derived in the same way as any pattern of multi-functionality: the

interpretation of a particular unit of language depends (in part) on its position in the syntactic spine (Wiltschko, 2014). In the case at hand, the *confirm that p is true* interpretation is the result of *eh* associating with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$. In contrast, the *confirm that you know p* interpretation is the result of *eh* associating with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$. This gives rise to the paraphrase *confirm that you know*. Thus, according to this analysis, part of the interpretive content is contributed by the spine. The contextual restriction does not derive the interpretation; rather, it constrains the use of *eh*: if the addressee has the authority over the truth of the proposition, then *eh* can only be associated with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$; if the speaker has the authority, then *eh* can only be associated with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$.

For completeness, let us consider cases where neither of the interlocutors has the authority over the propositional truth. This is the case in the context of subjective judgments: their truth is relative to the particular individual, sometimes called the *judge* (Lasersohn, 2005). To see this, consider the example in (41).

Context 0-13: Liam and Monique are going to the movie theater to watch a newly released movie. As they leave the theater, they discuss the movie.



- (41) <v.C13> Liam: This was such a good movie.
 Monique: a. Yeah, I liked it, too.
 b. Really? I didn't like it.

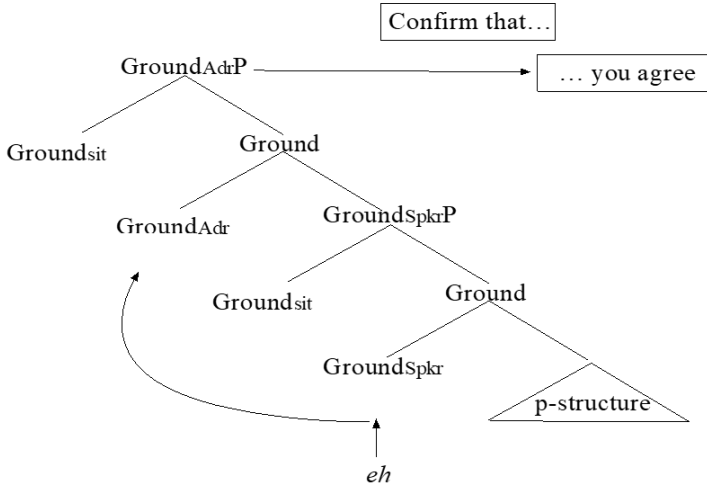
When Liam utters *That was such a good movie*, he conveys his own personal judgment about the quality of the movie. Since this is an evaluative statement, there is no objective truth. In this situation an interlocutor can agree with this evaluation, as in (41), or they can disagree, as in (41). Unlike what we find with objective statements (such as *I have a new dog*), disagreement here does not mean that the first interlocutor's statement is challenged: in this context, the interlocutors can agree to disagree.

Now consider what happens if we add *eh* in this context.

(42) <✓,CI3> Liam: This was such a good movie, **eh**?

Here, *eh* is used to request confirmation of the evaluation of the speaker. Crucially, it is not asking whether the speaker's evaluation is correct, but instead whether the addressee agrees with this evaluation. Hence, in this context, the contribution of *eh* can be paraphrased as *Confirm that you agree*. This follows from the assumption that *eh* associates with both $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ and $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$. It asserts that the speaker holds the belief that the movie was good, and, at the same time, requests confirmation from the addressee that they also hold this belief. The analysis for the *Confirm that you agree* interpretation is schematized in (43).

(43) Analyzing *Confirm that you agree*



6. How *huh* differs from *eh*

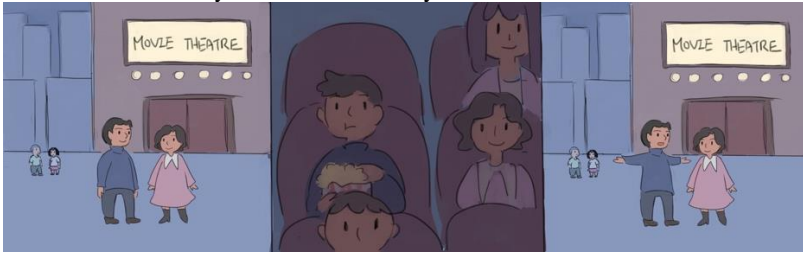
With the analysis developed thus far, we can now turn to a more careful investigation of the distribution of the confirmational *huh*. We have already seen that there is a contrast between the use of *eh* and *huh*. Specifically, both *eh* and *huh* can be used to confirm the truth of the proposition, but only *huh*, and not *eh*, can be used to confirm the addressee's belief. This contrast is (again) illustrated in (44).

(44) a. You have a new dog, {**eh**, **huh**}?

- = Confirm that it's true
 b. *I have a new dog, {eh, *huh}?*
 = Confirm that you know

We propose that *huh* differs from *eh* in that it never associates with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$. This can be gleaned from contexts of subjective judgement. Consider again Context 0-13, repeated below for convenience. As we have seen above, *eh* is well-formed in this context; *huh*, however, is not.

Context 0-13: Liam and Monique are going to the movie theater to watch a newly released movie. As they leave the theater they discuss the movie and Liam exclaims.



- (45) <v.C13> This was such a good movie, {eh, *huh}?

To understand what is responsible for the contrast in (45), it is useful to consider Context 0-14.

Context 0-14: Monique is dropping off Liam to go to a movie, while she has to teach a Yoga class.

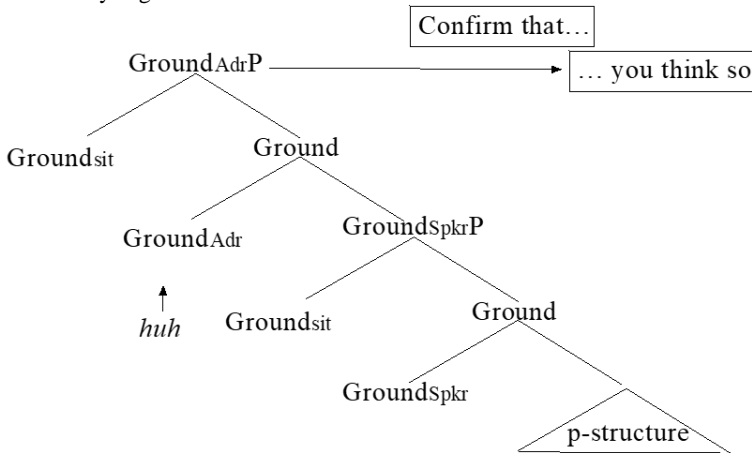


As Monique picks Liam up, he looks really excited, and she concludes that the movie must have been really good. So she asks:

- (46) This was a good movie {eh, huh}?

In this context, both *eh* and *huh* are felicitous, even though the same subjective judgment is reported. The difference between Context 0-13 and Context 0-14 has to do with who the judge is. In Context 0-13, the speaker (Liam) reports his own judgment, whereas in Context 0-14, the speaker (Monique) takes a guess at the addressee's judgment. Hence the interpretation of (46) can be paraphrased as *Confirm that you have this judgment*, which indicates that *huh* might have to be analyzed as an addressee-oriented confirmational (in $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$). If so, the difference between *eh* and *huh* would boil down to a difference in whether or not each tag can also associate with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$: *eh* can, but *huh* cannot.

(47) Analysing *huh*



This explains the data in (46): here Monique has no reason to believe that the movie was good. But if *huh* were to also associate with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$, then we would expect it to encode that the proposition (that *this was a good movie*) would also be in their Ground , which—given the context—it cannot be. If *huh* associates with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$, this interpretation follows. But this leaves us with the question how to derive the contrast in (44), repeated below.

- (48) a. *You have a new dog, {eh, huh}?*
 = Confirm that it's true
 b. *I have a new dog, {eh, *huh}?*
 = Confirm that you know

In (44), the speaker wishes to confirm that the addressee knows p , but crucially, the speaker herself knows p . Hence, this context is not compatible with a configuration where $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ is not occupied by a tag.⁸ Thus, the reason *huh* is ruled out in (44) is because *huh* does not associate with $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$.

7. When no response is expected: the narrative *eh*

Finally, we turn to the narrative function of the Canadian *eh*. There are several empirical properties that set this use of *eh* apart from all other uses. First, its intonation differs from the confirmational *eh*: the confirmational *eh* is realized with a rising intonation, as shown in Figure 0-1, while the narrative *eh* is realized with a flat intonation, as shown in Figure 0-2.

Figure 0-1: pitch contour for confirmational *eh*

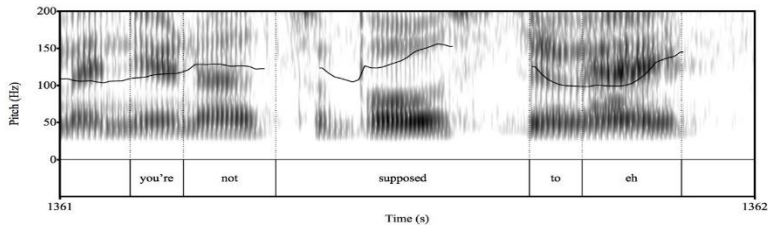
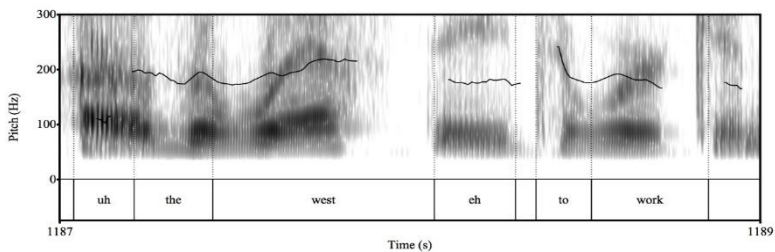


Figure 0-2: pitch contour for narrative *eh*



⁸ Everything else being equal, one may argue that the absence of valuation in $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ might be compatible with contexts where the speaker knows or doesn't have a belief about p . Thus, for this analysis to work, we have to assume that there is a requirement for the speaker to choose the syntactic configuration maximally compatible with their epistemic state. Given that there is a confirmational available that asserts the proposition to be in the speaker's Ground , this is the choice that the speaker has to make.

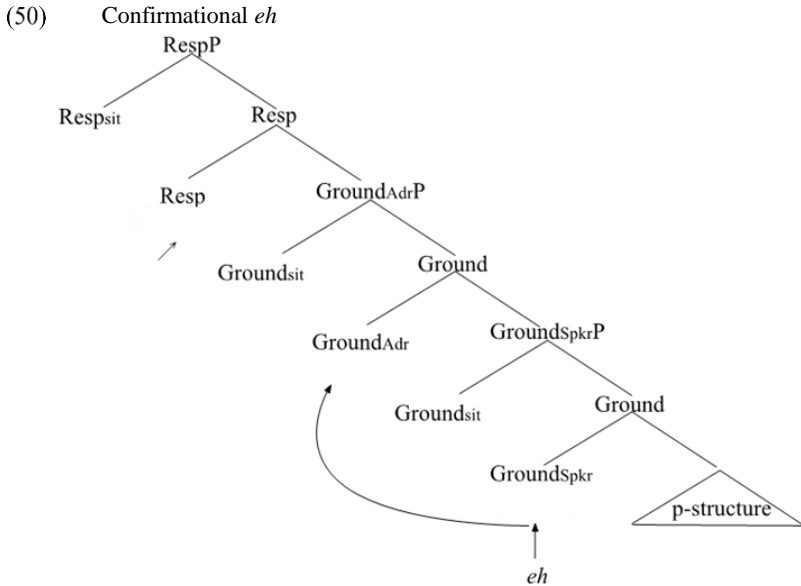
Second, the difference in intonation further correlates with a difference in context of use: while the confirmational *eh* requires a response from the addressee, the narrative *eh* does not (in Wiltschko et al., (2018), this is confirmed by corpus data). And finally, as expected given the difference in whether or not a response is required, confirmational *eh* has to be turn-final whereas narrative *eh* does not have to be, and is, in fact, frequently not. To see this, consider again the example in (49) repeated from above.

- (49) He's holding on to a firehose, **eh**? The thing is jumping all over the place, **eh**, and he can hardly hold onto it, **eh**? Well, he finally loses control of it, eh and the water knocks down half a dozen bystanders (Avis 1972, p. 103).

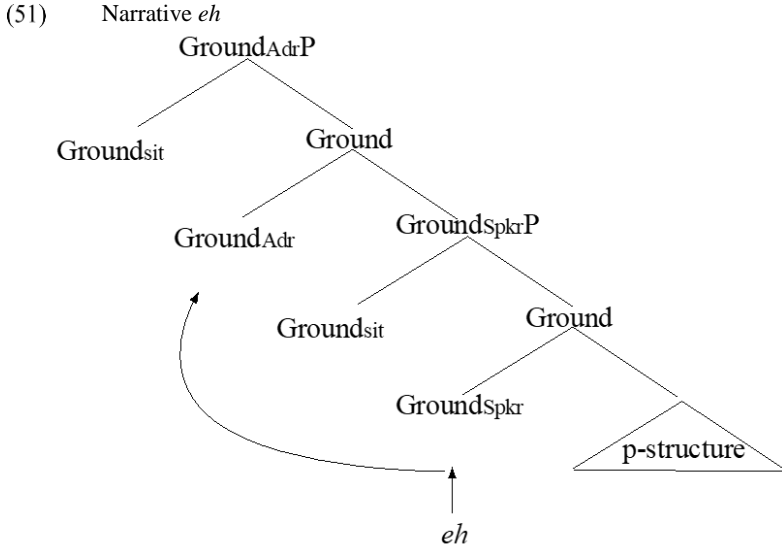
There are several instances of *eh* during this passage, none of which ends a turn. Hence it cannot be the case that the speaker is asking for confirmation. Johnson (1976, p. 157) describes this use of *eh* as follows:

Some Canadians extend these uses of *eh* so liberally in their narrative style, that virtually every sentence in a story is treated as if it were shared information and the addressee need only keep up with the logical development of the piece. An example of such a description: "He's holding on to a firehose, eh? The thing is jumping all over the place, eh, and he can hardly hold onto it, eh? Well he finally loses control of it, eh and the water knocks down half a dozen bystanders." (quoted by Avis (1972, p. 103); source not given. As Avis points out, in this context, *eh* frequently has a level rather than rising intonation). This narrative technique provides at least one example of the hyper-defensive use of *eh*, because the speaker here seems to be anticipating at every turn a challenge to the accuracy of plausibility of his story, even from people who are not in a position to do so with much authority.

To analyze the difference between the confirmational and the narrative *eh*, we propose that the difference lies in the presence and absence, respectively, of RespP. That is, the confirmational *eh* is characterized by the presence of *eh* in both $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ and $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$, as well as the rising contour in RespP, as in (50). We assume that the latter places the utterance into the addressee's response set deriving the call on the addressee.



Given the properties of the narrative *eh*, we propose that it lacks the Response Structure because it is left unmarked. This accounts for the fact that it does not require a response, and hence need not occur turn-finally. In terms of its intonation, we suggest that the flat intonation is simply the intonational contour that arises without an explicit intonational tune. Note that it is physically impossible to produce a sentence level intonation. A level intonation simply constitutes the absence of a fall or a rise, and is therefore the default option for omitting intonational meaning. Though note that, at this point, we do not have a diagnostic to distinguish between intonation that is encoded (i.e., that would serve as a unit of language), and intonation that just happens (i.e., which is merely a phonetic fact). The flatness of the intonation associated with narrative *eh* is certainly compatible with the assumption that it is characterized by the level intonation: there is simply no change in the intonational tune.



The interpretation of the narrative *eh* falls out from this analysis: when telling a story like the one in (49), the speaker will believe what she is saying, and because she is now telling her interlocutor, she will also assume that the addressee now believes what she is saying. Accepting an assertion is the unmarked case for a conversation. Thus, the narrative *eh* simply encodes that the speaker and the addressee believe what is being said. It is also clear in the context in (49) that the speaker has first-hand knowledge of the story she is telling. This implies that the uncertainty in a speaker's belief when they use *eh* cannot be an intrinsic part of the lexical entry of *eh*. But then how else does this uncertainty come about? One possibility is that it simply arises in the confirmational *eh* because of the request for a response. If people are certain about their beliefs, a response by the interlocutor will not make a difference for their own beliefs. It is only when speakers are uncertain about something that a response (preferably by someone with an authority over the truth of what is at issue) becomes critical to establish firm beliefs.

8. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to discuss some exotic tags in Canadian English. Because of their discourse function, we here followed Wiltschko

& Heim (2016) in labeling them confirmational. The reason to restrict this investigation to one particular variant in a particular dialect has to do with the fact that confirmationalals display much variation across different dialects, and even across sociolects and idiolects. This likely has to do with the fact that discourse markers are a spoken language phenomenon, and hence resist standardization: official grammars do not typically regulate the use of conversational speech, since it is assumed that it falls outside of sentence-grammar proper. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there is a systematic grammar associated with *eh* in the sense that its form, function, and distribution display systematic restrictions that require explanation. We have here developed a syntactic analysis, arguing that *eh* may associate with both $\text{Ground}_{\text{Spkr}}$ and $\text{Ground}_{\text{Adr}}$. In this position, it serves to assert that the utterance is in the speaker's and (if applicable) also the addressee's Ground. That is, the different functions of *eh* warrant the postulation of an articulated Grounding layer, one for the speaker, the other for the addressee. This implies that common ground, in the sense of Stalnaker, is not a primitive notion of grammar, but instead derives from the intersection of speaker and hearer Ground, which in turn are linguistically significant. In addition, we assume that the rising intonation that characterizes the confirmational *eh* associates with RespP (Wiltschko & Heim, 2016; Heim et al., 2016), and introduces the request for a response. It is this request for a response that derives the interpretation of epistemic uncertainty that confirmationalals convey. The uncertainty about the belief is not directly encoded in the confirmational itself, as evidenced by the fact that the narrative *eh* is used when the speaker is, in fact, certain about what she is saying.

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