‘I think – you know’  
Two epistemic stance markers and their significance in an innovation process

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Introduction

As early as the 17th century, The French philosopher Descartes proposed the expression “cogito ergo sum” ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Descartes, [1644] 1988). This illustrates a very literal interpretation of the linguistic expression ‘I think’ and thus paved the way for how western philosophers later were to perceive of knowledge and reality.

The expression ‘you know’ has similar allusions to early philosophy, albeit not in as literal a form as ‘I think’. ‘To know’ or the nature of knowledge was first introduced by Plato in “Theaetetus” (Cooper, 1970), and later on coined as a theory in its own right (Theory of Knowledge) by the Scottish philosopher James Frederick Ferrier in the 19th Century (Hay, 2008). The knowledge domain has since then been the locus of attention of many scholars and developed in diverse theoretical fields, perhaps most notably in sociological fields, studies of management and organisation, and philosophy. Whereas early (as well as contemporary) philosophers have been interested in notions such as truth, belief and justification (Hay, 2008), the management and organizational fields have been more occupied by macro-oriented approaches to knowledge such as how to share, manage and exploit organizational knowledge as a competitive force (Davenport and Prusak, 1997; Von Krogh et al., 2000; Evernden & Evernden, 2003). The more micro-oriented perspective on knowledge or epistemics, in particular within the field of Ethnomethodology and CA, has focused largely on territories of knowledge, rights and access to knowledge, and face-saving strategies by interlocutors in social interaction (Stivers et al., 2011: 7-10). Within the field of participatory design (PD) and participatory innovation (PI), the notion of knowledge from a conversation analytical point of view has hardly been addressed yet (Landgrebe & Heinemann, unpublished manuscript).

Thus, this paper sets out to examine the way participants in one selected collaborative innovation process employ the stance markers ‘I think’ and ‘you know’ as resources in the course of interaction. Through the fragmented and isolated linguistic lenses, ‘I think’ and ‘you know’ each has an inherent downgraded or upgraded stance marking quality to them, respectively. However, by employing the method of Conversation Analysis (Heritage, 2004), I aim to demonstrate how the two epistemic resources are employed by interlocutors who walk a fine-grained line between individual stance marking (the ‘I’) and shared stance marking (the ‘you’).

1 These notions were widely accepted until 1963, when Edmund Gettier, an American philosopher, questioned the then dominant theory of knowledge.
Data, interactional context and transcription

The data are collected from SPIRE (Sønderborg Participatory Innovation Research Centre), an independent Danish research center, which develops and tests new methods of participatory innovation (PI) and design (PD) (Buur & Matthews, 2008). The center brings together a broad spectrum of professionals and researchers from diverse fields to study complex issues of innovation and design. The data examined are selected from video recordings of four innovation and design workshops from an International PhD summer school at the SPIRE center. The official language spoken at the summer school was English. Similar recordings with industry representatives exist as well, but are not part of the data used here. The type of workshop investigated in this paper is the so-called value network workshop (Allee, 2000). One purpose of the value network workshop as conducted in SPIRE is that of involving actors at and across all organizational levels in a way so as to bring them together rather than just transferring knowledge from one party to another (Heinemann et al., 2009: 302). Further, the aim of fostering a democratic process is a prevalent ideology in innovative collaborative processes (Cherkasky, 2003; Heinemann et al., forth).

The data are analysed based on transcriptions of selected sequences of verbal interaction, and include aspects of visual interaction to the extent that it is relevant for the analysis. The transcription symbols employed are adapted from the transcript symbols developed by Gail Jefferson (Jefferson, 2004). The conventions developed by Jefferson remain intact, however some of the symbols have altered\(^2\), for reasons of software compatibility. The transcription software used is CLAN (MacWhinney, 2000).

Background

The pre-assigned task of the workshop participants is to create a value network of an imaginative company called ‘Coins Incorporated’, which produces cash card terminals. The participants are to build a visual model, which includes the company and its diverse stakeholders. For this purpose a predefined ‘toolkit’ of materials is at the participants’ disposal, and the idea is that they select objects from this toolkit to symbolise or represent stakeholders in the network model. To accomplish this task each group has 30 minutes, after which they are to present their model to external parties in the form of a video-recorded presentation.

The empirical data analysed are selected from video recordings of four Ph.D. summer school workshops. Two groups worked with feathers of different shapes and colours, whereas two other groups worked with metallic items of different sizes and shapes, see figures 1 and 2 for an illustration of two finalised value network models.

\(^2\) A list of the transcription symbols used can be found at the end of this article.
To show how the two epistemic markers ‘I think’ and ‘you know’ are used as interactional resources in a pre-assigned workshop task from the onset to the final stages, one out of the aforementioned four workshops, a feather workshop, has been selected to constitute the analysis section. Three participants are involved in this particular workshop and they speak English together, though none of them are native speakers of English. The analysis section is divided into two. The first part of the analysis focuses on ‘I think’ and the second part of the analysis focuses on ‘you know’. Each section is analysed chronologically to mirror how the interaction unfolds and progresses in real time.

**Literature and theory**

Drawing on the methodology of conversation analysis (CA), the systematic analysis of talk-in-interaction (Sacks 1984a), this article investigates how two distinct epistemic stance markers are used as interactional resources in a pre-assigned workshop task from the onset to the final stages, one out of the aforementioned four workshops, a feather workshop, has been selected to constitute the analysis section. Three participants are involved in this particular workshop and they speak English together, though none of them are native speakers of English. The analysis section is divided into two. The first part of the analysis focuses on ‘I think’ and the second part of the analysis focuses on ‘you know’. Each section is analysed chronologically to mirror how the interaction unfolds and progresses in real time.

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3 The nationality of the three participants is as follows: a Dane, a Japanese and a German. The official language of the summer school was English.
employed as interactional resources in one innovation workshop. CA is a qualitative and inductive approach with which the analyst systematically investigates thorough details of naturally occurring interaction (on video or audio) as a means to recreate the participants’ own perspectives on the interaction they were engaged in. The CA approach is used for the analysis of mundane interaction as well as institutional interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Institutional CA examines the work of social institutions (Heritage 2004), and for instance Drew & Heritage (1992: 22) argue that in institutional interaction, participants orient to a core goal or task. Further, participants may employ a range of multimodal resources in their strive to achieve understanding (e.g. Goodwin, 2007). However, one resource which has long been the locus of attention from a range of CA scholars is the notion of knowledge (or epistemics), i.e. how interlocutors interact in terms of ‘who knows what’, ‘who has the right to know’ and ‘who has access’. Early contributions within the field of Ethnomethodology originated from Goffman (1967), who demonstrated how participants do interactional work to maintain ‘face’ and how participants inhabit so-called ‘territoriums’ to which they have primary rights (Goffman, 1971: 38). Also the founder of CA, Harvey Sacks, pursued this domain early on and demonstrated i.a. how interlocutors possess different rights to first hand knowledge and second hand knowledge (Sacks, 1984b [1970]), and later on Labov & Fanschel (1977) developed the concept of A and B events. Pomerantz (1980, 1984a) dealt with similar notions, i.e. fishing devices and type 1 and type 2 knowledge.

To sum up, CA research has periodically dealt with one or other aspect of the broad epistemic domain e.g. Pomerantz (1980; 1984a; 1984b), Drew (1991), Heritage & Raymond (2005), Raymond & Heritage (2006). Recently, the notion of epistemics has gained renewed and reinforced interest in the CA community. For instance Stivers et al. (2011) are interested in the moral aspects of the epistemic domain, and Stivers & Rossano (2010), and Heritage (2008; 2012a) argue for a recognition of epistemics in line with turn-taking, adjacency pairs and sequence organisation, notions which are fundamental to the CA research agenda.

Within the notion of epistemics, three dimensions (with somewhat interrelated features) are identified; access, rights (primacy), and responsibilities (Stivers et al., 2011: 9), see figure 3:

![Figure 3: The three epistemic dimensions. (Own drawing inspired by Stivers et al., 2011: 9).](image-url)

Further, the degree of certainty with which a speaker displays epistemic access varies, and this relative certainty can be expressed in terms of K+ at one end of the knowledge scale, and K- at the other end of the knowledge scale, what Heritage (2012b: 4) also refers to as a ‘gradient’. Figure 4 provides a simplified overview of the two ends of the knowledge scale within which a speaker can express certainty in terms of epistemic access, thereby also displaying a strong(er)
or weak(er) epistemic stance to a specific matter. Thus, the two epistemic stance markers ‘I think’ and ‘you know’ can be employed by interlocutors in interaction in numerous ways, as they have downgrading and/or upgrading markers of certainty to them dependent on the interactional context, e.g. whether the stance markers are used in first or second position and whether the speaker has direct or indirect access.

![Figure 4: Epistemic access, ranging from unknowing (K-) to knowing (K+). The degree of certainty with which a speaker displays an unknowing or knowing position varies dependent on the interactional context. (Own drawing, inspired by Heritage, 2012b: 4).](image)

Goodwin (1979) demonstrates how speakers orient to the epistemic access of their interlocutors and aptly walk a fine line between addressing knowing (K+) and unknowing (K-) addressees. When speakers request information they presuppose that their recipients have epistemic access, whereas when they do announcements the presupposition is that the recipients do not have epistemic access (Stivers et al., 2011). Further, Heritage distinguishes between epistemic status and epistemic stance; as the former being a ‘somewhat enduring feature of social relationship’ in relation to an epistemic domain; the latter as a ‘moment-by-moment expression of these relations’ and thus managed through turns at talk (Heritage, 2012b: 6). In terms of stance taking, Heritage (2012b: 6) argues that when an interactant takes the epistemic stance of ‘unknowing’, he/she invites for an elaboration and thus projects a possible sequence expansion, whereas an interactant taking a more ‘knowing’ epistemic stance, creates a preference for inviting for confirmation and sequence closing” (see also Heritage, 2010; Raymond, 2010).

Epistemic stance markers are pervasive in interaction (Kärkkäinen, 2003: 1), and it is thus within this spectrum of knowing (K+) and unknowing (K-) that this analysis revolves, more specifically the two epistemic stance markers ‘I think’ and ‘you know’. Thus, the analysis section is organized as follows: in the first half of the analysis section I describe instances of interaction in which the stance marker ‘I think’ is employed. In the next half of the analysis section, I describe instances of the stance marker ‘you know’. Both stance markers are used to ensure overall progression of the activity, however, as will be evident from the analysis, in two distinct ways.
Analysis section on ‘I think’

Numerous resources with varying degrees of certainty can be used by speakers to downgrade or upgrade their epistemic access. One such resource is the certainty marker ‘I think’ (Stivers et al., 2011). Kärkkäinen (2003) states that ‘I think’ covers multiple functions of which some are similar to the way speakers employ ‘you know’ and ‘I mean’, but the utterance can also be a stance marker with full semantic content. Further, ‘I think’ predominantly occurs in types of activities with a task-oriented goal, where participants are to establish mutual agreement. Screibman (2001) describes how ‘I think’ often expresses the speaker’s degree of belief, opinion or subjective evaluation of a proposition, and Aijmer (1997) distinguishes between tentative and deliberate uses. When used with a hedging function, it expresses a degree of uncertainty about a proposition, whereas in the deliberate use it functions as a ‘boosting’ device.

In her in-depth analysis of ‘I think’ as a stance marker, Kärkkäinen (2003) identifies three main functions: 1. a starting point function to either explicate a speaker’s personal perspective – one which may co-occur with topic shifts, or it may display a new perspective on the same topic, or it may display an increased involvement and commitment; 2. a marker of on-line planning and 3. a device for completing a sequence or a turn at talk (see also Baumgarten & House, 2010).

In excerpt (1) ‘I think’ displays a new personal perspective on the same topic and further functions as a sequence completion marker. Speaker A employs it to reject C’s proposals. The end of turn position of ‘I think’ has a face saving or softening function and downgrades an otherwise explicit rejection (Kärkkäinen, 2003: 112) of C’s previous proposals. We enter the interaction at the outset of the workshop where the two participants, A and C, are to decide how to approach the entire workshop task. The third participant, B, is not present during these first minutes of the workshop activity.

Excerpt (1): Deciding on the work format of the workshop activity

1 A: So: the value chain
2 (0.4)
3 A: uh:[m]
4 C: [on] which (.) uhm *how many (.) ** should we list ***a::: partici****pants or:
5 *C starts turning away from A on uttering “how many”
6 *C visualises writing on an imaginary whiteboard or list
7 *** C turns her body back to front A and the table
8 **** C grabs paper on table
9 *(0.6)
10 * C lets go of paper
11 A: [uh:(0.2) should we uhm ]
12 C: [or should we] *write on the paper ** of of
13 * C visualises writing circles on the paper with a pen she holds in her hands
14 ** C points in the direction of the black box, which contains the feathers
15 A: [no] we just we just *[talk about] it I think
16 C: [xxxxxxx]
17 C: okay[\}]

At the outset C displays a weak epistemic position as she takes a (K-) stance to the matter by initiating three consecutive tentative questions: how to approach the task; how many stakeholders they should include or whether they should make a list of stakeholders (line 4). She does this in a very tentative and hesitating way, first by initiating her turn at talk with a question ‘on which’, which she cuts off, then by producing a hesitation marker ‘uhm’, after which she does a repair and a second attempt to pose a question (‘how many’), which is also cut off before finalised. At her third restart she proposes that they make a list of the stakeholders (‘should we list a::: participants or’) and finalises her turn at talk with a prolonged hesitation marker (‘or’) (line 4). All these resources combined display a clear weak epistemic position, revealing that she is ‘in the blank’ as to how to approach this workshop activity. This weak position is further supported by her non-verbal actions (turning body, pointing, and touching paper). A responds hesitantly (line 6) and in overlap, C formulates a fourth possibility in line 7, i.e. writing down the names of the stakeholders (‘or should we write on the paper of or’). C clearly displays her reluctance or inability to take a personal stance to this matter by framing both third and fourth proposal as a joint issue with the modal verb ‘should’ and the personal pronoun ‘we’, This is further strengthened as she cuts off her turn at talk by a repetitious hesitation marker ‘of of’, thereby displaying an inferior epistemic status, inviting A to take an individual personal stance to this issue. A takes a fairly strong epistemic stance on the matter, first by rejecting B’s proposals with an explicit ‘no’, then by counter proposing (line 8), after which he ultimately downgrades his rather direct and stipulative rejection with the tag ‘I think’. This functions as a qualifying utterance to his immediate prior talk (Aijmer, 1997) and thus opens up for a closing of the sequence (Kärkkäinen, 2003). C immediately acknowledges his rejection and subsequent counterproposal, first physically by removing the paper from the centre of the table (which is their workspace for building the model), then verbally by the acknowledgement token ‘okay’ (line 10). Now, their work format has been agreed upon, and they turn to the actual activity of building the value network model.

In sum, from excerpt (1) we see how speaker C, by uttering the tentative proposals, refrains from taking an(y) epistemic position to the task at hand and, by ending her turn at talk with hesitation markers, invites her co-participant to take a(ny) epistemic stance he or she finds ‘fit’. In principle, A could have acknowledged any of C’s four tentative proposals, but the way she formulates them allows for A to move on in any direction, as long as he takes an epistemic stance to the matter.

A few moments later, the two participants have progressed to selecting objects (feathers), which are to represent diverse stakeholders, simultaneously as they negotiate which particular stakeholders to include in the model. In this sequence, A proposes that they include the stakeholders ‘customers’ (represented by a pink feather) and ‘the mean black tax office’, i.e. the Tax Authorities (represented by a black octopus-like feather). He does this by framing his proposal as a hypothetical ‘what if’ formulation, see excerpt (2).

Excerpt (2): Selecting and deciding on the first stakeholders

1 A: \textit{what if we say \if \if \if \these are the \push xxx \if} \textit{A grabs a pink feather}

2 \textit{*A places pink feather on table}

3 \textit{these are the customers}
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4  C:   yeah
5  (0.4)
6  A:  →  u:hm:  * (0.8) **this (0.5) ***is the mean black tax
         * A grabs a black feather
         ** A lowers the black feather
         *** A places black feather on table
7  (0.5)
8  C:  →  *I th[nk thats gr[jeat
         * C claps hands and points towards A
9  A:  [office]
10  (0.5)

The hypothetical aura of ‘what if’ indicates that you are thinking out of the box, thus projecting that the upcoming proposal is potentially creative and unique, but also that you take a fairly neutral position in terms of epistemic rights. Further, A invites C into his creative thought activity by adding the personal pronoun ‘we’, rather than displaying that he has exclusive rights to decide. After A has proposed the pink feather to represent the customers and placed the object on the table, C produces an anticipating and positive assessment ‘yeah’ with upward intonation (line 3). Following a short pause (0.4 s), A hesitantly (‘u:hm’) takes the next turn at talk, and in the subsequent (0.8 s) pause, A grabs a black feather, and verbally introduces the next stakeholder ‘this is the mean black tax’ (line 5), and positions it on the table in front of them. C’s response is a distinct and upgraded positive assessment (line 7) ‘I think that’s great’, thus expressing her strong positive and personal stance; the personal stance is further emphasised by the stress on ‘I’ (Kärkkäinen, 2003). To support her verbalised stance, C visually claps her hands together and points with her index finger at A (see figure 5).

A                  C

Figure 5: C’s non-verbal resources supporting her verbalised stance ‘I think that’s great’.

In this sequence, C takes an inferior epistemic position by refraining to take the initiative to select objects and suggest possible stakeholders. In other words she ‘forces’ A to be the proactive participant, something which is presumably also a contributing factor to her strong positive verbal and non-verbal stance at sequence closing. Further, excerpt (2) takes place only a few moments after excerpt (1), and since C has just previously acknowledged A’s way of dealing with this task, by refraining to take any epistemic stance, a positive personal evaluation of his proposals is preferred to a negative one.

Excerpt (3) is similar in nature to excerpt (1), in the sense that the participants are negotiating how to further progress in their activity. All three participants are present at this time, and the issue up for negotiation is whether the internal stakeholders (i.e. different departments and employees) of Coins Inc. should be placed on top of the black lid (which represents Coins Inc.) and be represented by ‘something’ which is most likely to be labelled post-it notes, or whether they should turn the black lid upside down so as to allow for
‘throwing in’ feathers to represent the internal stakeholders, such as R & D, Sales etc. At sequence beginning, A initiates a new topic, whilst C and B are engaged in an activity of writing and placing labelled post-it notes on selected feathers on the table. Besides the verbal interaction, more than one activity is taking place between more than two interactants simultaneously and this is consequential for how the entire sequence evolves (a phenomenon which can perhaps be said to have similar interactional mechanisms as those characterised in schisming (Egbert, 1997). This differs from the two previous excerpts, where just two of the participants were present.

Excerpt 3: Negotiating the course of action between three participants

1 A: *[shall-]*
   *C and B are engaged in writing and placing labelled post-it notes on selected feathers, and A is holding a black box filled with feathers*
2 A: shall we send her *like stain and let\tor\*/MM*
   *C gazes up at A during her activity of writing on post-it notes*
3 MM*[or shall we j:u::hm (0.2) also consider like- (0.2) u:hm-
   (.) the engineers inside the company:: a:n err and dee a:n
   *C gazes down to write on a post-it note*
4 (0.6)
5 C: *[\ra::h]*
   *C has just finished writing on a post-it note, and places it on the table*
6 A: [mister] wall- (0.2) there too?
7 (0.3)
8 A: u::h
9 C: *[\thi\nk *here we can put [something]]
   *C uses both hands to show where on top of the black lid she suggests to place ‘something’. In each hand she has a pen, which she has just been using for her other activity of writing post-it notes*
10 B: *[no I think] we’ll [start\] it inside
   *B grabs for the black lid and turns it up side down*
11 A: [yeah]*
12 (0.2)
13 C: *[wo::u]
   *As B turns the lid, a little red magnetic button which represents ‘Mister Hardball’ falls off the top lid, and C reaches out to catch it*
14 A: yeah that’s good
15 *(0.8)
   *A takes out a red feather from the black box he has been holding the entire sequence, while B and C are engaged in relocating the red button and repositioning it inside the inverted black lid*

The negotiation sequence is initiated by A (lines 1-3). He provides two alternative proposals, both framed with the modal verb ‘shall’ and the personal pronoun ‘we’. He lets the last proposal ‘hang in the air’ for a while, thus displaying a K- position in terms of stance-taking. In principle, either of his two co-participants are selected to take a stance, however, both of them are engaged in other activity, and only C gazes up shortly before she reorients towards completing her own activity, which is writing a stakeholder name on a yellow post-it note. Following a 0.6 s pause, C displays understanding of what A talked of (line 5) with a change of state token, (Heritage, 1984), and in overlap with this, A adds an increment to finish his turn at talk (line 6). He does, however, still not receive an uptake on his proposals from either of his
co-participants, and he hesitantly initiates a new turn at talk. In overlap with this, C employs the individual stance marker ‘I think’ in a direct manner and proposes to add ‘something’ (most likely yellow post-it notes) on top of the black lid (line 9). She frames this proposal by gestural illustrations as to where to position the ‘something’ (see figure 6(a)). In overlap with C’s talk and gestural illustration, B explicitly rejects C’s proposal and produces a counter-proposal (‘no I think we’ll start it inside’ (line 10), while simultaneously physically taking her verbal counter proposal one step further by turning the lid upside down, as is illustrated in figure 6 (b-d).

**Figure 6: The non-verbal actions of B and C during their negotiation process.**

In this sequence, the two participants exploit their physical resources differently; C supports her verbal proposal, whereas B upgrades her verbal counter proposal by taking control of the black lid and repositioning it on the table. Objects and the way they are handled by participants can have a decisive role for the decision taking processes in innovation workshops (Landgrebe & Wagner, forth.), and in this particular instance we see how both B and C take an explicit individual epistemic stance as to how they each believe they should progress with their activity. C’s stance is a response to A’s invitation to engage in the decision taking process, whereas B’s stance is a response to C’s stance and thus a counterproposal. However, the way B and C employ their physical resources and make use of the objects on the table turn out to be significant for the outcome of that negotiation sequence; whilst C illustrates what could be placed on top of the black lid, B physically takes control of the black lid. A initiates closing of the sequence by vouching for B’s counter proposal as the valid one (line 11), first in overlap, and then he does a repair (line 14), after which he ultimately closes the sequence in the subsequent 0.8 s. pause, where he grabs for a red feather in the black box, thus also implicitly avoiding a potential emergent dispute between B and C.

In sum, the fact that more than one activity takes place simultaneously (besides the verbal interaction) plays a substantial role throughout this sequence. Further, it is of significance that the first speaker (A) does not select one recipient, as it opens up for both B and C to give their personal stance. The sequence develops into a negotiation between B and C. Since a subjective attitude may be difficult to challenge as either wrong or right, the non-verbal (physical) actions turn to be pivotal for the outcome of the negotiation sequence. It further shows that, at least in this particular workshop activity, which involves physical objects, the physical actions settle the verbal dispute/negotiation, and ensure that the participants can move on with the workshop activity.

Excerpt (4) differs from the previous examples in as much as this excerpt is not directly part of the negotiation or transformation sequences where the participants either have to agree on objects to represent stakeholders or negotiate how to physically construct the value network model. However, this sequence is nevertheless part and parcel of the overall workshop activity.
and an issue that the workshop participants need to attend to as part of ensuring progression and completion of the predefined workshop task. At this stage the participants are rehearsing a ‘trial’ presentation of their finalised value network model. Part of the pre-assigned overall workshop task includes a presentation of the final value network model to fellow Ph.D. summer school participants. The organisers have required this presentation to be video-recorded for subsequent presentation in plenum. We enter the interaction where participant B seeks certainty that the camera has captured her illustration of the ‘moving legs’ of the tax authorities (represented by a black octopus-shaped feather), see figure 7.

Figure 7: B holding the ‘tax octopus’ up in the air, moving its ‘legs’. On top a yellow post-it note reading ‘tax’ is placed.

In this particular case, B produces a polar question (Dryer, 2005; Stivers et al., 2010), seeking information about a state of affair, in this case whether the camera is recording; ‘is it- (.) is it uh put on this one’ (line 1), while pointing in the direction of the camera, see excerpt (4).

By requesting information B places herself in a (K-) position, and thus treats A as knowing (Stivers et al., 2011), or at least expects him to act in a way that will change his epistemic status from K- to K+.

Excerpt 4: Requesting information about a state of affair

1 B: is it- () *is it uh put on *this one*
   * B points at the camera with index finger
2 (0.2)
3 A: *uhh* (0.3) I think so
   * A approaches the camera
4 (0.2)
5 B: *okay*
6 (0.3)
7 A: *uh yes it is*
8 (2.2)
   * mutual loud laughter during the 2.2 seconds
9 B: okay huh huh
10 A: *it definitly is*
11 B: [we got] it this is the *tax* **(0.2) octopus
   *On uttering ‘tax’ B removes the yellow post-it note, which is attached to the side of the black feather
   **B sticks the post-it note on top of the black feather

Following B’s question, A moves towards the camera, and while approaching the camera he responds in a hesitant and tentative manner ‘uhh (0.3) I think so’. Thus, he explicates taking
for granted that the camera is recording, but in fact he doesn’t know; he merely assumes this to be the case (Aijmer, 1997). This assumption is further evidenced by the stress and rising intonation on ‘think’ (Kärkkäinen, 2003: 111), and the prolonged utterance of ‘uh’ and ‘h’ both contribute to his weak epistemic stance vis-a-vis B’s request for information. In other words, verbally A displays a downgraded epistemic stance to B’s request for information, but physically he moves to check the status of the camera as a means to change his epistemic status from uncertainty (K-) to certainty (K+). Though B seems satisfied with A’s tentative response (line 5), A, however, nevertheless treats himself as responsible for his vague epistemic stance in line 3, as he moves from one end of the “knowing” scale to the other (from mere assumption to an actual fact, and thus also from a weak to a strong epistemic position). The sequence is closed by his verbal affirmation (with a smile voice) that the camera is in fact recording (line 7), which elicits a fairly long sequence of mutual laughter (2.2 s). With his newly reinforced epistemic position A brings the workshop activity back to its original course by producing a partial repeat that the camera is ‘definetely’ on, thus ultimately displaying a very strong K+ status. B closes the sequence by asserting that they have sucessfully managed to record the (illustrative) movements of the ‘tax octopus’ (line 10).

To sum up, the individual stance marker ‘I think’ is employed as an interactional resource (in this particular workshop) in second or third position and is elicited by the first speaker in types of sequences where either a negotiation of the work format takes place, further progression of the workshop activity is pursued, selection and decision taking of stakeholders take place, or ultimately where a request for information is pursued. In all instances the first speaker’s relative (K- or K+) epistemic position has significance for how strong or weak an individual stance the next speaker displays. The weaker the epistemic positioning in first position is displayed (verbally and non-verbally), the stronger a display of individual stance taking is displayed in second position. A weak epistemic first position may be displayed with an expression such as ‘I don’t know how to deal with this’ or it may be displayed as a more direct invitation to a joint activity and mutual decision making, both however, invite for the co-participant’s individual epistemic stance taking. Further, at least in the instances analysed above, it shows that the objects and the physical activities contribute to support an otherwise weak verbal epistemic position or further strengthen a strong verbal epistemic position, and can turn out to be pivotal for the outcome of the negotiation process.

Analysis section – ‘you know’

Keevallik (2011) discusses the disparity between what we know and what we don’t know. Thus, along the scale of ‘not knowing’ (K-) vs. ‘knowing’ (K+), the most explicit means of claiming no knowledge is simply stating ‘I don’t know’, whereas the most knowing position a speaker can take is by explicitly claiming first hand knowledge of some matter, based on experience or evidential facts. Keevallik (2011) further states that in general participants convey what they know in implicit ways by downgrading or hedging a statement.

Whereas the expression ‘I don’t know’ is used in interaction to claim insufficient knowledge (Beach & Metzger, 1997; Kärkkäinen, 2003) and thus functions as a resource to save face on the part of the speaker (Goffman, 1967) or to invite another interactant to participate (Goodwin, 1986), ‘you know’ can be used in somewhat different interactional environments.
Both expressions, however, have a face-saving function to them, but in two distinct ways. Whereas the former avoids taking an(y) epistemic stance, the latter can invite for shared epistemic stance. For instance, Asmuß (2011) has investigated ‘you know’ in institutional meetings and demonstrates how speakers propose shared knowledge as a means to pursue agreement.

A ‘you know’ utterance can be found in turn beginnings as part of an extended sequence in which co-participants are invited to display their stance (Asmuß, 2011: 210), or they may be tags in sequence closings inviting co-participants to take over (Jefferson, 1972: 69). Further, Keevallik (2003: 171) demonstrates that ‘you know’ presupposes knowledge about the topic of discussion, and points to four different usages: 1. an appeal to the co-participant’s knowledge and involvement, 2. literal usage, 3. preannouncement, 4. projection of a news delivery.

In my investigation of ‘you know’ I aim to demonstrate how participants in one particular value network workshop use this interactional resource to orient to a common understanding and invite for involvement and a shared epistemic stance. Thus, in the following section, I describe five instances of ‘you know’ selected from one workshop, of which the first four are found in first position. The last instance is found in second position. The analysis section is analysed chronologically to mirror how the interaction unfolds and progresses in real time.

In excerpt (5) we see how A, in a declarative format, informs B, who is a newcomer to the workshop activity, which stakeholder a specific feather represents (i.e. the vendors), see figure 8. The stakeholders he refers to are vendors on flea markets, who have to offer potential buyers the possibility of paying for products on a cash card terminal. The feather representing the vendors is purple.

Asmuß (2011) investigates the Danish equivalent to ‘you know’ which is ‘du ved’. Other studies have demonstrated how ‘you know’ is used as a similar resource in other languages, e.g. Estonian (Keevallik, 2003) and Swedish (Lindström and Wide, 2005).
Excerpt 5: Updating a newcomer to establish common ground

1 A: [and-] *(that's the vendors)*
   *(A points at the purple feather)*
2 (0.3)
3 C: °mm°
4 B: yeah^
5 (.)
6 A: ⇒ *you know like the *people on there* on [the thing ↑[the]*feather]*
   *(A removes hand from pointing position and retracts hand)*
7 C: [ °uhuh uhuh°°] °°uhuh°°
8 (.)
9 A: [uh·hm ]
10 B: [like the people-]
11 *(0.7)*
12 A: *[B touches the purple feather]*
13 B: ⇒ *people on there*°
14 (0.3)
15 A: okay^
16 (0.4)

B responds (in line 4) to A’s informing with a minimal acknowledgement token ‘yeah’ (Jefferson, 1984), with a rising intonation which invites A to continue his talk. A thus extends his turn at talk by formulating ‘you know’ after which he engages in a slightly longer account of what the vendors do or are (line 6). During this stretch of talk, C produces a series of continuers (line 7) thereby claiming that she is in line with A’s understanding of the ‘vendors’, and having the same epistemic status as A. However, B does not display understanding, and when A (in line 10) progresses to a topic shift by uttering ‘uh·hm’, B, in overlap, seeks more information about ‘the people’; she cuts off her request for more information and touches the purple feather to emphasise exactly which feather she is confused about. This prompts A to specify what the ‘thing’ he referred to in line 6 is, i.e. a machine, which the vendors should use in a sales situation (a cash card terminal). B displays a change of epistemic status from unknowing (K-) to knowing (K+) (line 13), and A subsequently pursues agreement and sequence closure by the tag ‘okay’ (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). B is now a ratified participant in the same participation framework as C and A (Goodwin, 1996) and they now all share the same common ground (Goffman, 1976; 1981), or shared epistemic status.

Asmuß (2011: 209) states ‘you know’ implies that the other interactants are ‘in the know’ or knowing of the topic, or in the common ground (Clark, 1996). In excerpt (6), A proposes a pink feather to represent Money Inc., which is the holding company of Coins Inc. In this case, A presupposes that the other participants know and remember who Money Inc. is. During a previous workshop day at the Ph.D. summer school all 3 participants were acquainted with Money Inc. in a theatrical role-play.
Excerpt 6: Proposing a stakeholder presupposed to be in the common ground

1. A: and- is that maybe money incorpora ted
2. *(1.1) B gazes down
3. C: or::::uh
4. A: you know like the company owning their company
   *(1.2) A moves hand to the black lid; B gazes down in the direction of A’s hand
5. (.)
6. B: that hire Mister Hardball yeah
   *(1.3) A moves hand to the black lid again and then retracts his hand completely from their joint workspace
   *(2.1) B gazes up on A
   *(2.2) B lifts head slightly then nods, but keeps her gaze on the table
   *(2.3) B gazes on the table and she nods several times
   *(2.4) B moves her hand in the direction of the black lid
7. A: yeah
8. C: mister hardball is pink/is here°
   *(3.1) C grabs a red magnet button on the table and places it on top of the black lid
9. *YEAH* that’s good Mister Hardball is there
   *(3.2) A points with index finger in the direction of the red magnet

A designs his proposal in a hedged, interrogative format (line 1) with ‘maybe’, thus taking a presumably relative neutral epistemic stance. However, he has physically selected and positioned the pink feather on the table prior to him actually verbalising his proposal, hence he merely pursues acceptance of his proposal from his co-participants. The preferred response would be e.g. an explicit ‘yes’ or ‘good idea’. However, his co-participants do not recognize what he alludes to, and after a substantial pause (line 2) and no explicit uptake from B, who gazes at the table (line 2), A initiates a sequence extension with a ‘you know’ account, specifying what type of company Money Inc. is, see figure 9 (a-d). This takes place in overlap with C, who explicates a surprising ‘o::::uh’ (line 3), but refrains from engaging further in this sequence, as she is engaged with writing on yellow post-it notes, and reorients to this after her utterance in line 3. From line 4-7, the interaction takes place between A and B, exclusively.
After A’s extended ‘you know’ sequence accounting for who Money Inc. is, B responds in line 6 with the realization tokens ‘Nårh jaer jaer’ (which is pronounced with a Danish accent). By employing the series of realization tokens (Emmertsen & Heinemann, 2010), B orients to the presupposed knowledge, thus claiming that she has now understood (or remembered) what A alluded to. Following a substantial pause (2.2 s) where none of them take initiative to move on, B (in line 7) does a partial repair of her previous realization utterance with a “jaer”, in a low volume. A’s proposal is now both understood and accepted by B. C who has refrained from taking a stance to the matter, implicitly accepts A’s proposal by initiating a new turn, in which she changes topic to another stakeholder, ‘mister hardball’ (who is the CEO of Coins Inc., and in fact placed there by Money Inc.), and places a small red magnet button on top of the black lid to symbolize the CEO. A first recognizes the topic change, then assesses this as a good idea (lines 11 and 12).

In sum, this excerpt shows the interactants have difficulty in orienting to more than one person at a time (schisming). First A directs his proposal and subsequent extended ‘you know’ sequence at B, and subsequently these two engage in the interaction. C, on the contrary, takes up a new topic as a way to re-engage in the activity, but only after B and A have reached common ground on the subject of Money Inc.

In the interaction leading up to excerpt (7), the participants have just agreed on a number of new stakeholders and thrown feathers inside the black lid, which has been turned upside down (see also excerpt 3), after which B asks about some of the feathers they have previously agreed upon. She also enquires about who the pink feather represents (which is Money Inc.), which A re-informs her of. Following this exchange, A preannounces a proposal ‘↑maybe ↓maybe we could like *you know’ (line 2), in a hedged, tentative format (maybe and could), then invites for a shared understanding with ‘you know’. Following his verbal preannunciation, he physically moves a fragment of the pink feather inside the black lid to illustrate how he proposes the pink feather (Money Inc.) be linked directly to the red magnet button which represents the CEO (‘mister hardball’) of Coins Inc. To support his verbal utterance in line 4 and to illustrate the connection between Money Inc. and Mister Hardball (the CEO), he moves the pink feather further into the centre of the black lid where the red magnet button is placed (line 4). Concurrent with A’s talk and physical action, B assesses this as a ‘good idea’ and takes control of the pink feather. This ‘take-over’ is accepted without further ado on A’s part.

Excerpt 7: pre-announcing a proposal with ‘you know’

1     (0.4)
2   A:  
3     (.)
4   B:  
5   A:  
6   B:  

(locate the transcription in the image)
Though A’s proposal has a similar hedging format (‘maybe’) as the proposal in excerpt (6), it is different in the sense that it deals with a dynamic relation between three stakeholders, rather than just a state of fact, e.g. naming stakeholders and selecting objects for representation. In this particular case ‘you know’ pre-announces his actual proposal (Keevallik, 2003). Further, A’s simultaneous physical illustration of what he actually meant by ‘you know’, (namely to let part of the pink feather stay inside the black lid), functions as the actual proposal. Though he continues his account in line 4, B, in overlap, has already assessed this as a good idea, and taken control of the feather.

In sum, though his utterance in line 1 is formulated as a preannouncement (Keevallik, 2003), B understands it as an invitation to take over (Jefferson, 1972). Thus, his physical illustration of his proposal (see figure 10 (a)) is what activates B’s understanding of his proposal ‘oh yeah’ (see figure 10 (b)), after which she takes a positive stance to the proposal (figure 10 (c)) and physically takes control of the feather to complete the task.

A     B                C
(a): ‘you know…’    (b): ‘oh yeah.’    (c): ‘good idea…’

Figure 10 (a-c): Pictures (a) and (b) illustrate how A illustrates to B how he proposes the pink feather (Money Inc.) should be connected to the red magnet button (Mister Hardball) inside of the black lid. Picture (c) illustrates B’s non-verbal reaction to his proposal.
While A and B have reached mutual agreement, C is engaged in finding an alternative solution as to how to physically connect the pink feather to Mister Hardball (line 4 and line 8), but without verbally proposing her alternative solution. In line 10, however, C introduces yet an object (this time in the form of a whiteboard eraser) and proposes that they use this one instead. This opens up for a discussion about how to symbolise the relation between the pink feather (Money Inc.) and the black lid (Coins Inc.) and how Mister Hardball is connected to the two companies as well. Ultimately, it is decided to stick to the initial proposal to place part of the pink feather inside the lid, as initiated by A’s ‘you know’ account, now with Mister Hardball located on top of the pink feather, to illustrate that the mother company (Money Inc.) has ‘a finger’ inside Coins Inc. (Mister Hardball). Thus, C’s alternative solutions are ultimately rejected.

Here again, as in excerpt (6), we see the difficulty for participants to orient to and include more than one participant ‘in the common ground’. Further, when the participant who pre-announces a proposal with ‘you know’ does not orient towards involving all participants, more interactional work is hence necessary before they can reach common understanding and sequence closing.

In excerpt (8), B and A have discussed the role of the Supplier (a blue feather) and whether its present location next to the holding company Money Inc. is in fact the right position, see figure 11:

Figure 11: This picture shows the location of the Supplier, Money Inc. and Coins Inc.

They agree that the Supplier should be directly linked to Coins Inc. instead and separates the two feathers (the pink and the blue). They then realize that the Supplier should perhaps also be linked to the Competitor, which is placed at the other side of the table – far apart from the Supplier. We enter the sequence, where A requests for involvement from his co-participants as to how to get the Supplier and the Competitor linked as well:

Excerpt 8: ‘you know’ as an appeal to co-participants’ involvement

1 A:  *how do we get the link overthere*
   "A points in the direction of the competitor"
2 (.)
3 → *because the supplier is potentially [sort of you know]*
   "A points first at the supplier then at the competitor, then repeats this pointing pattern several times, and at turn ending, he retracts his hand completely"
In excerpt (8), A produces a ‘how’ question, searching for a solution to connect the two stakeholders ‘Supplier’ and ‘Competitor’ (line 1). A thus takes the perhaps most ‘unknowing’ epistemic stance to their on-going activity. Further, in the following extended sequence, A’s ‘you know’ utterance is positioned at the end of his turn, and in overlap with B’s talk. Thus, in this instance, the use of ‘you know’ shows how A gives up his turn at talk and lets a co-participant take over. B’s uptake is in overlap and she verbally proposes a way to deal with this issue (‘YEAH COULDN’T WE MAKE IT (.) LIKE THIS’) with a loud voice, while simultaneously physically rearranging the position of two stakeholders to support her proposal, see figure 12:

In sum, this is an example where A takes the most unknowing position possible, and this has significance for B’s response, who resorts to physical action to reach a solution and move on in the activity. In other words, her relocation of two feathers is pivotal for the outcome of the sequence.

So far, excerpts 5-8 are all sequences in which ‘you know’ is found as part of an extension sequence in first position. Excerpts 5 and 6 both invite for realization and establishment of common ground. In both turns at talk, which preface an extension sequence with ‘you know’, we find the static verb ‘to be’. Excerpts 7-8 invite for both a realization and further involvement from the co-participants. In both turns, we find the dynamic verbs ‘to get’ and ‘to do’ just prior to and after the ‘you know’ utterance, respectively. Further, in both turns the speaker employs ‘we’, which also orients towards achieving joint cooperation and mutual understanding.
Excerpt (9) is the first sequence where ‘you know’ is found in second position. Two similar sequences were identified subsequent to excerpt (9), but are not included in the analysis section, as they reflect the same interactional pattern as no. 9.

In the interaction leading up to excerpt (9), participant A and B have been discussing the potential danger that the Competitor and Supplier to Coins Inc. could make an alliance or whether the Supplier could in fact become a competitor on its own, since the Tax Authorities have issued a tender which potentially could allow for other companies than Coins Inc. to produce the cash card terminals for use at flea markets. B opens up the issue whether they are in fact also competitors, but this is rejected by A who claims that this was not an option in this particular case because the supplier was from Spain (and not Denmark). Though B accepts A’s factual explanation, she pursues the matter further by enquiring whether it could nonetheless be a possibility:

Excerpt 9: Striving to get a possible scenario accepted

1  B:  *okay but uh could we: couldn’t it
* B has her left hand on the red feather (the competitor)
* (0.8)
* B’s hand stays on the red feather
2  *(0.8)
3  A:  * yeah well if [i::f] (0.2) * if (0.2) **sort of (.) you know
* A points in the direction of the red feather
* B retracts her hand from the red feather
4  C:  [*uhm*]
5  B:  *[it] *could be a possibility
* B places hand over the red feather, moving her hand slightly in small circles
* A’s index finger remains in pointing position
6  * (0.2)
7  A:  * h
* A retracts his pointing finger slightly towards himself but index finger remains in pointing position
* (0.4)
* A makes a repetitive pointing gesture with index finger
8  A:  * TRY (.) they were the ones (0.2) who (.) sort of (0.4) offered
9  the bidtech right (.) or th- the tender also
* A stops pointing and now opens the palm of his hand in the air above the black feather (=the tax authorities)
10  (.)
11  B:  *ye[a-]
12  C:  *[u]hum
13  A:  *right
14  * (0.2)
15  B:  * uhu[m]
16  A:  *[s]o: (0.3) * there might be a question mark if the:::y (0.3) uhm engage hi:::m
* A’s open hand is now turned into a pointing finger again, and he does repetitive pointing gestures in the direction of the stakeholders they are debating about.
17  * (0.3)
18  A:  *and they do this (.) then there’s the ?link?! between [the:m]
* A continues his repetitive pointing gestures
19  B:  *[yeah]
20  * (0.5)
A responds hesitantly with ‘yeah well’ followed by a series of ‘ifs’ and pointing in the direction of the red feather, and finishes his turn at talk with ‘you know’. B pursues the matter even further this time by stating that it could in fact be a possibility (line 5), while holding her hand over the red feather (= the Competitor). In overlap with her verbal utterance, A’s finger remains in pointing position until line 8 where he stops pointing, and opens the palm of his hand in the air above the black feather (= Tax Authorities) while stating that the tax authorities were the ones who offered the tender, after which he recognizes that it is a possibility that the competitor and the supplier could potentially link up to form an alliance against Coins, Inc. Finally, A acknowledges that the link is a possibility and is thus now in the same common ground as B. The topic at issue goes on far beyond this short sequence, and the following two examples in which ‘you know’ appears, are found in extended sequences in which the participants pursue a discussion as to how to symbolise the links symbolized between the tax authorities, the suppliers and competitors.

**Conclusion**

‘I think’ is solely identified in second (or third) position and is the speaker’s resource to take a relative individual epistemic stance, elicited by a first speaker. ‘You know’ is found in both first and second position. In first position, it is the speaker’s resource to invite the recipient for a shared epistemic stance. Used in second position ‘you know’ functions as a sort of hedging device to reach common ground on a possible scenario, which the speaker initially did not agree with. In other words: ‘I think’ is a speaker-oriented stance marker, employed to mark the speaker’s individual epistemic stance, in an upgraded or downgraded manner. ‘You know’ is a recipient-oriented stance marker, employed by the speaker to invite his co-participant(s) to display understanding and/or to engage in the activity, or as a hedging device to reach common ground, thus turning the activity into a collaborative activity and transforming the epistemic status from one of individual epistemic stance into one of joint (or shared) epistemic stance. This transformation ensures a smooth and very cooperative progression of the overall activity.

Further, one example from each analysis section (excerpts 3 and 8) in particular suggests that the fact that the participants, besides their verbal interaction, are concurrently (either individually or collaboratively) engaged with some sort of manipulation of objects which is significant for the way interactants use the two stance markers. As neither ‘I think’ nor ‘you know’ is explicitly targeted at one selected participant, it may turn out that words are not enough, and the objects and the physical actions of the participants become pivotal for the outcome of the sequence.

Finally, from the temporal progression of the entire workshop activity, it further suggests that the workshop participants during the course of app. 30 minutes of workshop activity undergo a process from individual stance marking towards a shared stance marking. At the outset of the workshop, the speaker in first position invites or pursues for the co-participant(s) to take an individual stance, which elicits the next speaker to employ ‘I think’, whereas well into the workshop activity when they have built up some shared knowledge and mutual understanding of their activity, fewer instances of ‘I think’ appear, and instead instances with ‘you know’ begin to appear in first position. In these instances the first speaker is inclined to invite
for involvement or joint understanding/shared epistemic stance. Ultimately, the use of ‘I think’ vanishes completely, and towards the end of the workshop, instances with ‘you know’ in first position fade out as well, and instead ‘you know’ is found in second position as a resource to build up argumentation for a certain opinion or idea that is pursued.

Many institutional meetings per se have a competitive trait, however, though value network workshops take place in institutional settings, they have a somewhat different trait. One goal of such workshops is for people across professional barriers to meet and foster ideas, to create shared knowledge and mutual understanding. In the light that businesses and organizations encourage collaboration across professional skills and organizational boundaries (Nonaka, 1994) and that a goal of the value network workshops as conducted at SPIRE is to provide a platform within which workshop participants can share and create joint knowledge (Heinemann et al., 2009), we can see that the interactional resources ‘I think’ and ‘you know’ both can contribute to fulfil this purpose, but in two distinct ways.

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Transcription symbols

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