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Hebrew nu: Grammaticization of a borrowed particle from synchronic and diachronic perspectives

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1 Introduction

Hebrew *nu* is a non-referential item borrowed into the language in the early days of revival of spoken Hebrew, as is the case for many discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987) in language contact situations (e. g., Brody 1987; Maschler 1988, 1994, 2000; Salmons 1990; Matras 1998). Even-Shoshan's dictionary (2003) classifies it as an interjection and provides the information that *nu* was "imported from the European languages", which could be understood as mainly Russian (*nu*), Yiddish (*nu*), and possibly Polish (*no*). Even-Shoshan provides the meanings *'efo* ('therefore'), *hava* ('let us'), *uvxen* ('well then') – all words of rather high register. To these meanings, another dictionary (Avneyon 1998) adds a colloquial use: *milat zeruz* ('an urging word') and provides the example: *nu kvar, bo! hasha'a me'uxeret*! ('*nu* already, come! It's late!').

Previous studies of this discourse marker (Maschler 1998, 2003, 2009) in casual face-to-face conversation among friends and relatives found that the main function of *nu* is urging further development of an ongoing topic (69 % of all tokens) (Maschler 2009). The following segment from the Israeli 'Survivor' reality TV show is unique in confirming some of the properties of *nu* revealed in those studies:

Excerpt 1: 'Survivor' Reality Show[1]

```
06  Itay:  ...'ani rotse 'axshav shetasbiri        li,
            I    want  now    that you will explain to me
            'I'd like you now to explain to me,'

07         mul        kulam,
           'in front of everybody,'

08         ma--      gorem  lax laxshov,
           'wha--t's causing you to think,'
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[1] For transcription conventions, see Appendix.

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09   *she'ani haxi   taxman.*
        that I'm the most conspiring person
        'that I'm the biggest 'operator'[among everyone here].'

10   *lama?*
        'why?'

11   *biglal   she'ani haxi   shaket?*
        'because I'm   the most quiet [person]?'

12 Efrat: ...*'exad,*
             'one,'

13   *'e--h,*
        'u--h,'

14   *ken.*
        'yes.'

15 Itay: ..*'okey.*
             'okay.'

16 Efrat: ....*shta--yim,*
              'two--,'

17   *'ani xoshevet Itay 'e--m,*
        'I think   Itay uh--m,'

18   ...*shegam   batkufa   shel Kaniba,*
           that also during the era of   Kaniba
           'that also during the Kaniba era,'

19 Itay: ..***nu?***

20 Efrat: ...*lo.*
             'no.'

21 Itay: .....|*/dabri/.*
             |'/speak/.'

22 Efrat: |*'ani 'adaber baketsev sheli--,*
            |'I'll speak   at my own pa--ce,'

23 Itay: ..*dabri,*
           'speak,'

24 |*dabri,*
          |'speak,'

25 Efrat: |*vekshe'ani* |*'ertse lehotsi mila--,*
          |'and when I| want to get a wo--rd out,'

26 Itay: |*vaksha.*
                     |'please.'

```
27  Efrat:  'ani 'otsi mila.
            'I'll get  a word out.'

28  Itay:   vaksha.
             {ironically}
            'please.'

29  Efrat:  ...'al   tagid li   nu,
               don't say   to me nu
               'don't say 'nu' to me,'

30          ve'al     tezarez 'oti.
            'and don't rush    me.'

31  Itay:   ...slixa.
              {ironically}
              'excuse me.'

32  Efrat:  ..toda.
             'thank you.'

33          ....'e--h,
              'u--h,'

34          'ani xoshevet she--,
            {Itay rolling his eyes}
            'I   think   tha--t,'

35          ...Itay,

36          ..gam  batkufa       shel Kaniba,
             also during the era of  Kaniba
             'also during the Kaniba era,'
```

In response to Itay's request that Efrat explain why she views him as 'the biggest "operator"', Efrat first confirms the reason supplied by Itay (*'ani haxi shaket* 'I'm the most quiet [person around here]', line 11), and proceeds to begin the second reason (lines 16–18): *shta--yim, 'ani xoshevet Itay 'e--m, shegam batkufa shel Kaniba,* ('two--, I think Itay uh--m, that also during the Kaniba era,'). Line 18 ends in continuing intonation.[2] However, Itay does not wait for the continuation but rather hastens Efrat with a token of *nu* (line 19). In response, and possibly under

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2 Adapting Chafe's studies of English intonation (1994: 60) to Hebrew, by 'continuing intonation' we refer to a range of non-terminal Hebrew pitch contours (all transcribed by a comma) and distinguished from: (1) the terminal falling pitch contour associated with the end of a declarative sentence or a question-word question and (2) the terminal high rising pitch contour associated with a yes-no question.

the influence of the existence of an overhearing audience[3] (Goffman 1981), Efrat turns around to face him with the negation element *lo* ('no', line 20) employed here as a discourse marker (Maschler 1998) and the metalingual utterance (Maschler 1994) *'ani 'adaber baketsev sheli--, vekshe'ani 'ertse lehotsi mila--, 'ani 'otsi mila. 'al tagid li nu, ve'al tezarez 'oti* ('I'll speak at my own pace, and when I want to get a word out, I'll get a word out. Don't say '*nu*' to me, and don't rush me') (lines 22, 25, 27, 29–30). Efrat explicitly spells out the function of *nu* as a hastener here, and her utterance attests the impatience she associates with it. With the ironic utterances *dabri* ('speak'), *vaksha* ('please'), *slixa* ('excuse me') and the eye roll (lines 23–24, 26, 28, 31, 34), Itay ridicules Efrat's dramatic response, attempting to minimize her presentation of him as impolite.

Following the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics (Schiffrin 1994: 97–136; e. g. Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1982; Tannen 2007 [1989]), we employ the term 'impoliteness' in its everyday sense (rather than as a term in a theory of politeness), stemming from the attempt to control another's actions (here – hastening an interlocutor). Previous study shows that the majority of *nu* tokens in casual Hebrew conversation do not seem to be interpreted as impolite because in fact they function to encourage the flow of talk rather than obstruct it. Taking the liberty to control the flow of another's discourse can be perceived as polite in that it is indicative of the audience's high involvement in the speaker's talk. "By exhibiting their impatience in moving forward in a topic – to the point of attempting to control the flow of another's discourse via *nu* – hearers show maximal involvement in the talk" (Maschler 2009: 74). In argumentative contexts, however, it was shown that this is not the case, and *nu* is often interpreted as impolite in the sense that it obstructs the continuation of talk, as it did in excerpt 1 (Maschler 2003, 2009: 55–59). The 'Survivor' example documents in the most explicit fashion the impolite aura associated with *nu* in Israelis' metalinguistic awareness.

In the present study, we extend the investigation of the discourse marker *nu* to a corpus of Israeli political phone-in radio programs.[4] These explorations reveal additional uses of this discourse marker not commonly found in casual talk, thus expanding our understanding of the functions and structural properties of *nu*.

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3 The overhearing audience here consists of the other 'survivors' co-present in the tribal council, as well as the imagined home audience.

4 The radio data come from 100 interactions, over 7.5 hours (458 minutes) of talk, which took place on three different programs on the two leading public stations in Israel (see Dori-Hacohen 2012a for more details concerning the database).

In considering the various uses of *nu* throughout the mundane and radiophonic databases, we will see that some of them are mainly sequential, in the sense that they pertain to the unfolding of the sequence of actions taking place in interaction (as in the 'Survivor' excerpt above), whereas others pertain more to the construction of key (Hymes 1986), emotion, or affect, defined as "displayed heightened involvement in conversation" (Couper-Kuhlen 2009: 94).[5] Maschler has studied the question of how it may come about that a particular discourse marker might come to have two such different functions (2003, 2009). Our study sheds new light on this matter and discusses the implications for grammaticization theory (Hopper 1987; Hopper and Traugott 2003). In the final section of this chapter, we expand our synchronic study both diachronically and with respect to language contact, shedding further light on the grammaticization of the particle *nu* in its path from Yiddish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish into Hebrew.

2 *Nu* in everyday conversation vs. on political phone-in programs

Because of its perceived impoliteness as seen in the 'Survival' segment above, we would perhaps not expect to find much employment of *nu* on political phone-in radio programs. Indeed, while the frequency in casual face-to-face talk averages one token approximately every 1.3 minutes, the talk-radio corpus manifests an average of about one token only every 8.6 minutes.

This finding is even more striking when considering the difference in medium between the two corpora. Some studies have found that telephone conversations show a higher rate of minimal responses such as *um, ah, er* because of participants' need to hold onto the floor and the lack of kinesic features aiding them in this task (e. g., Ball 1975; Beattie 1977). Considering that hastening a speaker could in principle be accomplished kinesically (via an earnest gaze or some head nodding, for instance), we might expect more *nu* tokens in *non*-face-to-face interaction, yet the radio phone-in interactions actually manifest fewer *nu* tokens.

Nu was shown to be employed in four functions in the corpus of casual talk: (1) urging further development of an ongoing topic, (2) hastening a non-verbal action, (3) granting permission to perform an action (as a "go-ahead" token, Schegloff 1990, 2007), and (4) as a keying token, coloring the utterance with a tone ranging from joking to provoking (Maschler 2003, 2009). Not only frequency, but also the distribution of *nu* differ across the two corpora:

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5 The terms 'key', 'emotion', and 'affect' will be used interchangeably throughout the chapter.

Table 1: Distribution of *nu* tokens across functions in casual conversation vs. talk-radio

	Urging further development of ongoing topic	Hastening non-verbal action	Granting permission to perform action	Keying token	Total	Frequency
Casual conversation	79 (69 %)	6 (5 %)	3 (3 %)	27 (23 %)	115 (100 %)	1:1.3 minutes
Talk-radio	13 (24 %)	1 (2 %)	11 (21 %)	28 (53 %)	53 (100 %)	1:8.6 minutes

At first glance, it seems that the two corpora manifest the same discourse functions for *nu*. Upon further examination, however, we will see that this is not accurate. One difference which can already be discerned has to do with the second column – hastening a non-verbal action (such as the example provided in Avneyon's dictionary and cited in the opening of this study). In the corpus of casual talk, participants occasionally hasten each other to perform actions in the extralingual world via *nu*. In the particular corpus investigated, this included actions such as tasting some soup, stopping to cough, completing an interaction with another customer at the supermarket, etc. In the radiophonic data, there are no such cases simply because participants are not generally mutually engaged in other actions besides their talk. The one non-verbal action hastened throughout the entire radiophonic database consists of *nu* uttered by a caller who hastens himself to remember a name. This, then, constitutes hastening a cognitive action, which is borderline between a verbal and a non-verbal one (cf. Maschler 2009: 50–51). Because this category in the radiophonic corpus consists of only one token, we will not elaborate on it here.

3 Sequential functions of *nu*

3.1 Urging further development of ongoing topic

Table 1 shows that while in casual conversation, the main function of *nu* is urging further development of an ongoing topic (69 %); in the radiophonic data, only 24 % of the tokens function in this role. Examine, for instance, excerpt 2, an interaction in which the caller brings up what is known as Israel's 'demographic problem', i. e., the belief that within about two decades, the majority of Israeli citizens will not be Jewish. The host attempts to get him to suggest solutions to the 'demographic problem':

Excerpt 2: 'Let's Say I Were Foreign Minister' 27. 5. 05

284 Caller: *..yesh   li   ra'ayon 'adir!*
     there is to me idea   great
     'I've got a great idea!'

285 Host: *..daber!*
     'speak!'

  {20 intervening intonation units}

305 Caller: *tsarix   hayom*
     'it's necessary today'

306   *naniax   hem hayu*
     'let's say they would'

307   *ze   hatsaga ma   she'ani 'omer,*
     it['s] show   what that I   am saying
     'it's a show what I'm saying,'

308   *'al   taxshov she'ani mitkaven 'axshav birtsinut.*
     don't think   that I mean   now   seriously
     'don't think I mean it seriously now.'

309 Host: ***nu.***
     {*in despair*}

310 Caller: *naniax   shehayu samim   'oti sar   haxuts   karega?*
     let's say that they would put me minister of exterior now
     'let's say they appointed me foreign minister now?'

311   *....'ata yodea ma   hayiti 'ose?*
     'you know what I'd   do?'

312 Host: *..**n--u?***

313 Caller: *hayiti 'omer,*
     'I would say,'

314   *..'ani rotse kol sarey   haxuts,*
     'I   want all foreign ministers,'

315   *yihiyu po   muli,*
     will be here in front of me
     'to be here in front of me,'

316   *...'e--h,*
     'u--h,'

317   *..ro .. roma pariz london 'amerika rusya,*
     'Ro .. Rome Paris London America Russia,'

```
318        ..'ata yodea,
             'you know,'

319        ..kol  sarey  |haxuts.
             'all foreign|ministers.'

320 Host:                |ken   ken ken  ken.
                         |'yeah yeah yeah yeah.'

321         |nu?

322 Caller: |'ani rotse la'asot shalom,
            |'I'd like  to make peace,'

323        ..bamizrax    hatixon,
             in the east the middle
             'in the Middle East,'

324        ..'aravim 'im  hamuslemim.
             'Arabs  and the Muslims.'

325        ..yesh    milxama beyn   muslemim leye .. yehudim,
             'there's war    between Muslims  and Je ..Jews,'

326        naxon,
           'right,'

327        ..ze      hamatsav?
             'this [is] the situation?'

328 Host:  ...ken.
             'yes.'

329 Caller:..tsarix         lahem,
             it's necessary for them
             'they need,'

330        sheyavo'u      la'asot seder.
           that they come to make order
           'to come make some order.'

331        ..hafrada    totalit,
             separation total
             'total separation,'

332        ...totalit,
             'total,'

333        ...totalit,
             'total.'
```

Following many digressions up until now in the interaction, the caller opens with *yesh li ra'ayon 'adir*! ('I've got a great idea', line 284). Once more, he digresses to something else and 20 intonation units later finally begins to elaborate his solution to the problems in the Middle East (lines 305–306). He digresses yet again, this time to a metalingual comment: *ze hatsaga ma she'ani 'omer, 'al taxshov she'ani mitkaven 'axshav birtsinut* ('it's a show what I'm saying, don't think I mean it seriously now', lines 307–308). At this point, the host loses some of his patience and, employing *nu* in a tone of despair (line 309), hastens him to return to the topic – his proposed solution – which he indeed does in line 310.

Similarly, when the caller continues, but digresses yet again, this time to over-elaborate on the foreign ministers who would take part in his solution: *ro.. roma pariz london 'amerika rusya, 'ata yodea, kol sarey haxuts* ('Ro..Rome Paris London America Russia, you know, all foreign ministers', lines 316–319), the host responds with the repetition *ken ken ken ken* ('yeah yeah yeah yeah') in final intonation contour, indicating that this elaboration is unnecessary (cf. Stivers 2004). Subsequently, by employing *nu* in line 321, he escalates this indication by hastening the caller's return to the ongoing topic, which the caller indeed returns to immediately following the hastening.

3.2 Granting permission to perform action

As pointed out in Maschler (2003), as a hastener, *nu* appears as a first pair part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Schegloff 2007), initiating a move further advancing the topic. Thus, in the previous example, e. g., when the host employs *nu* following the caller's digression elaborating on the foreign ministers (excerpt 2, lines 316–321), this *nu* initiates a return to the ongoing topic, to which the caller responds in the subsequent intonation units.

When granting permission to perform an action, on the other hand, *nu* appears as a second pair part – a "go-ahead" (Schegloff 1990, 2007), as can be seen in line 312 of excerpt 2. In line 310, the caller responds to the host's hastening *nu* (line 309), abandons his metalingual digression of lines 307–308, and returns to his solution to 'the demographic problem'. He describes a hypothetical situation: *naniax shehayu samim 'oti sar haxuts karega*? ('let's say they appointed me foreign minister now?'). In the absence of response to this utterance ending in rising question intonation and followed by a slightly longer pause, the caller, in pursuit of response, adds an additional question: *'ata yodea ma hayiti 'ose*? ('you know what I'd do?', line 311). This question – a first pair part – receives a *nu* response from the host (line 312), an action allowing the speaker to elaborate, which he indeed does in the following lines.

As can be seen from Table 1, the frequency of this type of *nu* rises from 3 % in the casual conversation corpus to 21 % in the radiophonic data. This has to do with the fact that such *nu* tokens tend to follow metalingual announcements of performing some action in the discourse realm: e. g., *'az 'agid lexa ma bo'er* ('so I'll tell you what's so urgent', see Excerpt 3 below), *'ani 'agid lexa lama* ('I'll tell you why'), *bo 'agid lexa* ('come I'll tell you'), *takshiv* ('listen'), *lama 'ani sho'el 'otxa 'et ze* ('why do I ask you this'), *bo 'od davar* ('come another thing'), *ten li rak lehashmia lexa ..rak lehagid lexa 'et hadavar haze ve'ani gomer* ('let me just sound you [out] .. just tell you this thing and I'm done'). Such metalingual announcements (a special type of *pre-*'s (Schegloff 1980) are common in non-narrative, argumentative discourse, but much less so in narrative discourse. Narratives are not very common in the talk-radio corpus (Hacohen 2007), whereas they constitute a significant portion of the casual conversation database (Maschler 2009).

As pointed out in Maschler (2003), this 'go-ahead' *nu* is quite similar to Finnish *no* (Sorjonen 2002). In Finnish, however, two different particles have emerged – Finno-Ugric *nii(n)*, urging further development of a topic (Sorjonen 2001, 2002), and *no*, a 'go-ahead' (see also Sorjonen and Vepsalainen, this volume). In Hebrew, a single utterance, *nu*, performs both functions.[6]

So far, all radiophonic *nu* tokens we have seen were employed by the host. Indeed, callers employ *nu* at a significantly lower rate (see Table 2), even though callers talk much more on these programs than hosts do:

Table 2: Distribution of *nu* tokens across hosts and callers

	Urging further development of topic	Hastening non-verbal action	Granting permission to perform action	Keying Token	Total
Total	13 (100 %)	1 (100 %)	11 (100 %)	28 (100 %)	53 (100 %)
Hosts	11 (85 %)	0	6 (55 %)	24 (86 %)	41 (77 %)
Callers	2 (15 %)	1 (100 %)	5 (45 %)	4 (14 %)	12 (23 %)

We see that hosts employ *nu* for urging further development of a topic almost 6 times more often than callers. Indeed, ensuring a lively development of topics is one of a host's main roles in such programs. Not only would hastening a host be considered impolite for a caller, keeping time and maintaining interest for the audience are not among a caller's responsibilities.

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6 See Maschler (2003, 2009: 67–68) on a sequential explanation for how this single form might come to be employed in both of these functions.

In order to understand the relatively high rate of callers' employment of *nu* for granting permission (45 % as opposed to 15 % in the first column of Table 2 and 14 % in the fourth), let us examine excerpt 3, an interaction which took place on the eve of general elections in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority in early 2006, following the Israeli evacuation of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli prime minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, had had a stroke. The caller here addresses the acting prime minister:

Excerpt 3: 'What's So Urgent?' 18. 1. 06

```
145 Caller: 'ani pone,
             'I'm addressing,'

146          darkexa,
             'through you,'

147          be'emet,
             'really,'

148          lememale       mekom rosh  hamemshala.
             to the filling place prime minister
             'the acting prime minister.'

149          ...'ana   mimxa.
                please from you
                'I beg you.'

150          tidxe       'et hakol 'ad    'axarey   habexirot,
             'postpone everything until after the elections,'

151          ma      bo'er!
             what's burning
             'what's so urgent!'

152 Host:    ...'ani yaxol la'anot lexa?
                I   can    answer you
                'may I answer you?'

153 Caller:          xamesh
                     'Five'

154          ..shniya.
                second
                'just a sec.'

155          ten  li rak  lesayem.
             'let me just finish.'

156 Host:    ...ken.
                'yes.'
```

157 Caller: ...*xamesh shanim mexakim 'im kol hasipur haze.*
               five   years   waiting with all the story the this
               'five years they've been waiting with this whole thing.'

158   ..*'efshar 'od xodesh xodshayim?*
             is it possible another month   two months
             'is it possible to wait another month or two?'

159 Host: ..*'efshar be'od xatsi shana.*
             it's possible in another half   year
             'it's possible to wait another half a year.'

160 Caller: *ma bo'er.*
                           what's burning
                           'what's so urgent.'

161 Host: ..*ze lo hanekuda.*
             'this [is] not the point.'

162 Caller: *ma.*
                           'what'

163   *ma bo'e--r!*
             what's burning
             'what's so urge--nt!'

164   *ma.*
             'what'

165 Host: *'az 'agid lexa ma bo'er.*
             so I'll tell you   what's burning
             'so I'll tell you what's so urgent.'

166   ..*'ata rotse lishmoa?*
             'you wanna hear?'

167 Caller: *nu.*

168 Host: .. *'ata sha'alta.*
               'you asked.'

169   .../*'az/ ten lanu,*
               '/so/ let us,'

170   *na'ane lexa.*
             'we'll answer you.'

171   *bishvil ma 'ani po?*
             for   what I   here
             'what am I here for?'

172   ....(in breath) *hare--y,*
                    'as you kno--w,'

```
173        ..hayom  'anaxnu--,
            'today we--'re,'

174        ...lesimxatenu,
              to our happiness
              'happily,'

175        nimtsa'im besheket yaxasi.
           found    in quiet relative
           'enjoying relative quiet.'
```

The caller ends his plea to the acting prime minister 'to postpone everything' (i.e., any further unilateral Israeli concessions) with the utterance *ma bo'er*! ('what's so urgent!', line 151). The host, who had already attempted a response in line 152 (lines 154–155), attempts another response to the second *ma bo'er* (lines 159, 161), again to no avail. Only upon the caller's third *ma bo'er* does the host succeed in getting the floor, and this – by treating the caller's utterance literally, as a question: *'az 'agid lexa ma bo'er* ('so I'll tell you what's so urgent', line 165). To this *pre-* (Schegloff 1980), the caller responds with *nu* (line 167), overlapping the beginning of the host's *'ata rotse lishmoa*? ('you wanna hear?', line 166).

An interlocutor's signaling that the speaker continue with his/her action can be accomplished with varying degrees of enthusiasm on the part of the interlocutor concerning the speaker's continuation. Thus, we begin to see the affective hues which often accompany this sequential token – a topic which will be further elaborated in section 4. Earlier research has shown that the sequential functions of *nu* can be described along "a continuum of 'degree of encouragement to proceed with action' [...] from 'most encouraging' to 'least encouraging':" urging one to perform the action, hastening it, granting permission, allowing, allowing reluctantly (Maschler 2003: 114). While hastening an action is mainly a host's responsibility, granting permission to perform a conversational action may become, at least in Israel, a caller's task, and, as we see in lines 152–156, the caller may choose not to grant it. With the *nu* of line 167, the caller indeed finally grants permission for the action announced by *'az 'agid lexa ma bo'er* ('so I'll tell you what's so urgent', line 165), but he does so rather reluctantly. His reluctance is evident in his blocking the action until the host's third attempt at it. Furthermore, the host's elaborate institutional response following this token of *nu* shows that the caller's reluctance is not lost on the host: *'ata rotse lishmoa? 'ata sha'alta. /'az/ ten lanu, na'ane lexa. bishvil ma 'ani po*? ('you wanna hear? you asked. /so/ let us, we'll answer you. what am I here for?', lines 166–171). A person enthusiastic to hear an explanation is in no need of such an introduction.

We are not claiming that the caller's reluctance is accomplished only via the *nu* token here. Clearly, it is accomplished also by the various accompanying strategies

discussed in the previous paragraph. We would like to suggest, however, that when a go-ahead token is recurrently performed in contexts involving reluctance, over time, the result may be that reluctance becomes strongly associated with the token itself (more on this below).

4 Keying *nu*

The reluctance of the *nu* token in the previous example (excerpt 3, line 167) accompanies its sequential function. We will now develop the argument that over time, certain recurring affects accompanying sequential *nu* have become dissociated from its sequential functions, so that certain *nu* tokens have come to function only affectively, as keying tokens, with a greatly diminished sequential quality.

The main function of *nu* in the talk-radio data is not in the sequential realm, but rather as a keying token. While this function is manifested by less than a fourth of all casual talk cases (23 %), in the radio programs over half the tokens (53 %) are employed in this manner.

Earlier study (Maschler 2003, 2009) has shown that in the corpus of casual conversation, keying *nu* can be described along a continuum representing the degree to which a speaker is aligned/disaligned vis-à-vis the interlocutor (Figure 1):

Joking >>> mocking >>>mocking at addressee's expense >>> ridiculing >>> provoking >>> provoking disrespectfully >>> belittling

Figure 1: Continuum of keys constructed by *nu* in casual interaction

On one extreme of this continuum we find alignment in the form of joking with the addressee, on the other – disalignment in the form of belittling him or her, with the additional possibilities of mocking / mocking at addressee's expense / ridiculing / provoking / provoking disrespectfully in between. The majority of keying *nu* tokens in the casual talk corpus, which consists of conversations among family and friends, fall close to the joking extreme. In the talk-radio data, on the other hand, the majority of tokens fall close to the opposite extreme. Moreover, we find additional hues of key constructed by *nu* which vary from scorn to sheer contempt, thus stretching the continuum further beyond the point at which the casual talk continuum ended (see Figure 2). The study of *nu* in the political phone-in radio program thus reveals subtleties of key constructed by *nu* which are not found in the casual conversation database:

Joking >>> mocking >>> mocking at addressee's expense >>> ridiculing >>> provoking
>>> provoking disrespectfully >>> belittling >>> **scornful >>> contemptuous**

Figure 2: Continuum of keys constructed by *nu* in radio talk

In sub-section 4.2, we investigate a keying *nu* token constructing a humorous mocking tone. In sub-sections 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 we explore other keying *nu* tokens, gradually moving towards the contemptuous extreme along the continuum. We examine the mocking, ridiculing, belittling, and contemptuous keys constructed by *nu* in the political phone-in radio program in order to decipher how a sequential element might gain affective functions.

4.1 Ridiculing

In the following interaction, the caller complains about the lack of attention paid to a month-long strike on public transportation at the relatively remote southern town of Be'er Sheva. Throughout the interaction, the host, broadcasting from a studio centrally located in Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, responds with cynicism concerning the general situation of the country (see Dori-Hacohen 2014). His cynicism peaks following the caller's plea that one of the Labor Kneset members deal with the problem:

Excerpt 4: 'Be'er Sheva Public Transportation Strike' 15. 12. 04

```
331 Caller:...'ani xoshev she--,
               'I    think  tha--t,'

332        mishehu  mi.. mi.. mihaxakim         shel ha'avoda--,
           'somebody from..from..from the Kneset members of Labor,'

333        ..'eh tsarix le..lehakim  kol   tse'aka--,
              uh needs  to..to raise voice cry
              'uh needs to..to raise a loud ca--ll,'

334        ve--ken,
           'and ye--ah,'

335        'ulay letapel banose    haze,
           maybe tend    in matter the this
           'maybe tend to this matter,'

336        lama lo--?
           'why no--t?'
```

337 Host: ...*tagid li*,
      'tell me,'

338   *bishvil ma   'atem   tsrixim 'otobus*,
      for   what you (PL) need   bus
      'what do you (PL) need a bus for,'

339   ...*'im be..meile*,
        'if in..any case,'

340   *le..be..ku..be..be'eyfo she'ata holex lekabel ta'trufot*
      to..in..fu..in..in where that you go   to get the medications
      'to..in..fu..in..where you go to get medicine,'

341   *'en   trufot*,
      there are no medicines
      'there is no medicine,'

342   *ve--'eyfo   she'ata holex lekabel ta'xinux*,
      a--nd where that you go   to get the education
      'a--nd where you go to get education,'

343   *mi   yodea*,
      'who knows,'

344   *'im yesh   xinux*,
      'if there is [any] education,'

345   ...*ve.. ve..'e--h*
        'and..and..u--h'

346   *xevre*,
      'you guys,'

347   *ze   hakol beyaxad*,
      it['s] all   together
      'it's all part of the same deal,'

348   ..**nu--**.

349   *tir'e*
      'look'

350 Caller: *ze   hakol beyaxad*,
      it['s] all   together
      'it's all part of the same deal,'

351   *ze   naxon*.
      'that['s] true.'

352 Host: ../????/

353 Caller: *'aval shuv*,
      'but again,'

354   *'im narim   yadayim,*
          if we raise up [our] hands
          'if we give up,'

355   *ve.. ve.. ve.. venomar   no'ash,*
          and..and..and..and we say despair
          'and..and..and..and lose hope,'

356   *...lo nagia   leshum makom.*
             we won't arrive to any place
             'we won't get anywhere.'

This *nu* functions in an entirely different realm compared to the *nu* tokens investigated so far. It is also found in a different structural environment. This is not stand-alone *nu*, as in all the cases above, but rather *nu* accompanying same-speaker talk. It differs structurally also in that it is accompanied by more prominent prosody – a marked vowel elongation signaling heightened emotional involvement on the part of the host. We are not concerned here with a function in the sequential realm, i. e., with urging development of an ongoing topic or with a 'go-ahead',[7] as can be gathered from the fact that the person who uttered *nu* – the host in our case – continues speaking in the immediately following intonation unit (line 349). Furthermore, when the caller does respond (line 350), it is not to any hastening functions of this *nu*: We see no further elaboration of his ongoing talk. In fact, there has been no ongoing talk by the caller in the immediately preceding 11 intonation units (lines 337–347), and in the lines preceding those, the caller had completed his conversational action – a plea that someone from of the Labor party tend to the long-lasting strike (lines 331–336).

     The host cynically asks the caller why they should try and get Be'er Sheva's public transportation back to work if none of the public services one might ride to is worth going to anyway (lines 337–344). He ties all three public services – transportation, medicine, and education – together in the utterance *xevre, ze hakol beyaxad, nu--* ('you guys, it's all together, *nu*', or 'it's all part of the same deal, *nu*', lines 346–347). The utterance *xevre* is a low-register, slightly ridiculing term of address towards a group of people, composed of the base of *xaverim* ('friends'), suffixed by the slightly belittling morpheme *-eh* (instead of the MASC PL *-im* suffix).[8] It addresses the caller as representative of the residents of Be'er Sheva –

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7 While all tokens of *nu* are clearly 'sequential' in the sense that they are embedded in a sequence, the main realm in which keying *nu* tokens operate is not the sequential realm but rather the interpersonal one, as will be shown below.

8 English 'you guys', far from being perfect, is the closest we could come up with.

or perhaps as representative of the program's audience in general – who, in the host's opinion, do not understand the dire state which the society is in. *Nu* here functions to strengthen the ridiculing tone of the utterance.

In response to the *nu* of excerpt 4, line 348, the caller accepts the general grim picture depicted by the host (*ze hakol beyaxad, ze naxon* 'it's all part of the same deal, that's true, lines 350–351), accepts being appointed representative of the public (by his employment of first person plural *narim ...nomar* 'we will give up', 'we will say', lines 354–355), but rejects the host's implication that there is no use in fighting for change (lines 354–356). In so doing, the caller accepts the host's argument while rejecting his ridiculing key. We therefore see the caller indirectly relate to the keying function of this *nu*.

In order to explain how a token functioning in the sequential realm of discourse comes to function also in its interpersonal realm, as a keying token, Maschler (2003, 2009: 75–77) posited another continuum along which *nu* could be described – that of metalanguage:

> On one of its ends would be *nu* urging non-metalingual actions [such as the dictionary example (Avenyon 1989) *nu kvar, bo! hasha'a me'uxeret*! ('*nu* already, come! It's late!), found only in the casual conversation corpus[9]]; on the other would be *nu* urging metalingual actions **via explicit metalingual utterances**. The majority of cases fall in between these two ends – urging metalingual actions (mostly, further development of a topic) **un**accompanied by a longer metalingual utterance. In other words, sometimes the metalingual utterance is spelled out, as in [...] *nu, tasbir*! ('*nu*, explain!'). But more frequently, the metalingual utterance is only implied and is to be gathered from context, [as in the 'Survivor' excerpt]. This is the case particularly with [...] keying *nu*. The metalingual utterance is seldom spelled out in these instances (2009: 75–77).

For example, in *xevre, ze hakol beyaxad, nu--* ('you guys, it's all together, *nu*', lines 346–348), *nu* can be interpreted as urging an implied metalingual utterance, such as *nu, 'atem lo mevinim*? ('*nu*, don't you (PL) get it?'). As is often the case with metalingual utterances in discourse (Maschler 2009), they can easily be gathered from context and are therefore often redundant.[10]

> [W]hat is left of these longer metalingual utterances – the *nu* – embodies only the key, from derogatory to joking; it verbalizes only the tone encompassed by the longer utterance vaguely in the background. Like the smile of the Cheshire Cat, then, the keying *nu* token is all that remains of the longer metalingual utterance implied. In this way, a word functioning

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9 With the possible exception of the one *nu* found in the radio corpus (Table 1) which is employed as a self-hastener of the cognitive action of remembering a name; see section 2.
10 For support for this argument based on speaker interpretations, see Maschler (2003, 2009).

> in the sequential realm of discourse comes also to have an interpersonal keying function (Maschler 2009: 76–77).

In the following section we will see that an examination of the structural properties of the various *nu* tokens throughout the corpus sheds more light on the path from sequential to keying token.

4.2 Structural features of keying vs. sequential *nu*

The preceding excerpt is not representative of keying *nu* tokens in that the great majority of them (26, 93%) occur before, rather than after, the utterance they modify, as will be demonstrated in all of the following examples. However, all keying *nu* tokens (28, 100%) – those preceding as well as those following the utterance they modify – share the structural property of not occurring as stand-alone utterances. This is in contrast to sequential *nu* tokens (both urging further development of ongoing topic and granting permission to proceed), which, in the great majority of cases, are unaccompanied by additional same-speaker talk, as can be seen in Table 3:

Table 3: *Nu* tokens accompanied and unaccompanied by same-speaker talk

	Stand-alone *nu*	Non-stand-alone *nu*	Total
Urging further development of ongoing topic	12 (92%)	1 (7%)	13 (100%)
Granting permission to perform action	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	11 (100%)
Keying token	0	28 (100%)	28 (100%)

We see that only a single *nu* token urging further development of an ongoing topic (7%) and 3 tokens of 'go-ahead' *nu* (27%) are accompanied by additional talk by the same speaker.

The exceptions to this strong tendency, such as the one *nu* urging further development of an ongoing topic,[11] are telling. When examined closely, we see that they indeed begin to acquire keying functions as well. At the start of the interaction from which excerpt 5 below is taken, the caller is driving his car and communicating with the host via the speaker-phone on his cell phone. Because

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11 A non-stand-alone 'go-ahead' token of *nu* is examined in excerpt 7 below.

reception is unsatisfactory, he pulls off to the side of the road, picks up the receiver, and proceeds to elaborate his political views. Following several minutes, when his views become less coherent, the host invites him to clarify his thesis employing humorous mockery:

Excerpt 5: 'The privilege of Talking on the Radio' 14. 1. 05

```
352 Host:   yakiri,
             'my dear,'

353          ..'ata yodea ma   ze   ledaber baradyo?
                 you know  what this to talk on the radio
             'do you know what it means to talk on the radio?'

354          ..'ata yodea 'eyzo zxut      zot?
                 you know   what privilege this
             'you know what a privilege this is?'

355          ...bo   tomar 'eyze mishna sdura,
                come say     some Mishna ordered
                'come tell us some well-formed thesis,'

356 Caller:     'okey.
                'okay.'

357 Host:   ..sheteza'azea,
                'that will shake,'

358          mosdot       'arets veshilton.
             bases [of] land   and regime
             'the bases of the land and its regime.'
                               {fixed phrase reminiscent of 'earthshaking'}

359          ..tagid mashehu.
                'say  something.'

360 Caller:        (laughs)

361 Host:   ..nu,

362          yesh lexa   hizdamnut.
             is    to you opportunity
             'you've got an opportunity.'

363          'ata  'omed     betsidey    haderex,
             'you're standing at the side of the road,'

364          ..maxzik .. shfoferet,
                'holding.. [a phone] receiver,'
```

```
365      ..kol ha'am    makshiv  lexa,
           all the people listening to you
           'the entire nation is listening to you,'

366      ...kulam          druxim,
           'everybody [is] on their toes,'

367      ...tagid mashehu!
           'say  something!'

368      ....ten 'eyze besora!
             'give some gospel truth!'
```

The *nu* in line 361 both urges the caller to further develop his thesis in a clearer form (lines 355–358) while at the same time continuing to construct the humorous mocking key which the host had begun in line 352 with the vocative *yakiri* ('my dear') – a highly marked form of address on these programs. It functions to soften his slight reprimand that the caller may not be fully aware of the privilege of talking on the radio and its implication not to waste the audience's time with vague theses (lines 353–354). His request *bo tomar 'eyze mishna sdura, sheteza'azea, mosdot 'arets veshilton* ('come tell us some well-formed earthshaking thesis', lines 355–357), softened by self-mockery resulting from employing the extremely high-register idioms *mishna sdura* (lit. 'organized Mishnah',[12] 'well-formed thesis') and *mosdot 'arets veshilton* (lit. 'bases of the land and its regime'[13]), is reiterated by lower-register *tagid mashehu* ('say something') of line 359. When the caller laughs in response (line 360), the host's immediately following *nu* both urges him to continue his thesis more comprehensibly and continues to humorously mock him in a way that softens the reprimand by pointing out the positive dramatic circumstances of the discourse – a unique opportunity of 'standing at the side of the road, holding a receiver', with 'the entire nation on their toes', waiting to hear what he has to say (lines 362–366). The token of *nu* intensifies this humorous mockery. An English 'equivalent' of this particular *nu* might be 'come on'.

Not surprisingly, this sequential token is accompanied by the structural features of a keying token – the accompaniment of additional same-speaker talk. It is thus an exception proving the general pattern found in this database, that

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12 This fixed idiom goes back to that part of the Talmud (the Jewish Canon) called Mishnah – the collection of oral texts which *husderu* ('were assembled') to form the canonic written text.
13 The prior text (Becker 1979) here is the last line of a famous poem by the national poet Bialik (1933) called *'al hashxita* ('Concerning the Slaughter'), written following the Kishinev pogrom in 1903.

keying *nu* tokens are never stand-alone tokens, whereas the great majority of sequential *nu* tokens are.

Such borderline cases illuminate another aspect of the process by which an element functioning in the sequential realm might come to have also keying functions. According to Traugott's Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (1999), conversational implicatures become conventionalized as a result of processes of metaphor and metonymy in communication. As Dahl explains, "if some condition happens to be fulfilled frequently when a certain category is used, a stronger association may develop between the condition and the category in such a way that the condition comes to be understood as an integral part of the meaning of the category" (1985: 11). Since attempting to control an interlocutor's actions (the 'category' in Dahl's terminology) is inherently impolite, this action will often be accompanied by mitigating devices, such as the humorous mocking of Excerpt 5 (Dahl's 'condition'). If the two (category and condition) co-occur frequently enough in the culture, sequential *nu* may begin to acquire the particular keying hues (humorous mockery in this case) in addition to its sequential role. As often happens in such processes of semantic change (Traugott 1999), the two may become dissociated from each other. Thus, eventually, the keying function might become dissociated from the sequential one, and in certain contexts, *nu* will come to function only in its affective role, as we have seen, e. g., with the ridiculing *nu* of Excerpt 4 and as will be demonstrated in the following excerpts.

4.3 Belittling

The great majority of keying *nu* tokens in the talk-radio data, however, do not provide a humorous mocking key. Closer to the contemptuous extreme on the continuum of keys (Figure 2), we find *nu* which belittles the caller for contradicting him- or herself. In Excerpt 6, for instance, an interaction which took place several months preceding the evacuation of the Gaza Strip, the caller demands a referendum on whether or not to evacuate. She claims that such a referendum will awaken public debate on the topic. In line 200, following the host's question, she stresses that such public debate currently does not take place:

Excerpt 6: 'Referendum' 9. 2. 05

```
198 Host:  hu  lo
          'it doesn't'

199       ..hu  lo     ne'erax    hayom?
            'it doesn't take place today?'
```

```
200 Caller: ..hu  lo     ne'erax.
               'it doesn't take place.'

201        hu  lo     ne'erax!
               'it doesn't take place!'
```

Following many additional arguments, about 100 intonation units later, the host returns to this point:

```
312 Host:  ...'aval 'od    pa'am.
               but   another time
               'but once again.'

313        la'arox   mish'al      'am,
           to conduct questionnaire people
           'conducting a referendum,'

314        'adayin lo      mavtiax,
           'still  doesn't assure,'

315        derex 'agav,
           'by the way,'

316        'et      ko--l hadiyunim,
           'DIR OBJ  a--ll the discussions,'

317        ...she--ye'asu,
               'tha--t will take place,'

318        'im yihiye mish'al    'am,
           if  will be referendum people
           'if there is a referendum,'

319        ...'otam             diyunim,
               'those [very same] discussions,'

320        'efshar      gam la'asot,
           'it's possible also to do,'

321        mibli   mish'al      'am.
           without questionnaire people
           'without a referendum.'

322        ...lama         lo 'osim 'otam?
               why [are they] not doing them
               'why aren't they taking place?'

323 Caller: ....'osim            'otam.
               {-----pp-----}
               [they are] doing them
               'they are taking place.'
```

```
324        ....'osim          'otam.
           [they are] doing them
           'they are taking place.'

325 Host:     nu!

326        ..me'a       'axuz!
           one hundred percent
           'great!'

327 Caller:      'ani to'enet 'aval   shemish'al 'am,
                 'I'm claiming though that a referendum,'

328        ...hu,
           'it [will],'

329        ..davka    yexazek    'otam.
           'actually strengthen them.'
```

In lines 313–321, the host disconnects conducting a referendum from the occurrence of public debate on the topic of evacuation: Just as a referendum will not guarantee public debate, so public debate can take place regardless of a referendum. His argument ends with the question *lama lo 'osim 'otam*? ('why aren't they [i. e. discussions of public debate] taking place?'). Following a relatively long pause, the caller admits very quietly: *'osim 'otam. 'osim 'otam* ('they are taking place. they are taking place', lines 323–324). The host overlaps her repetition of this clause with *nu! me'a 'axuz*! (nu! lit. 'one hundred percent!', lines 325–326). The idiom *me'a 'axuz*! ('one hundred percent!') is employed in Hebrew roughly in equivalence to English 'great!'. In other words, in light of the caller's utterance in line 323, the situation is 'great' in the host's eyes, because it is precisely the way he had claimed it to be earlier – namely, that public debate is already taking place regardless of a referendum.

Again, the function of this non-stand-alone *nu* is clearly not in the sequential realm because it does not urge further development of an ongoing topic or function as a 'go ahead'. Structurally, this *nu* is followed by same-speaker talk of the host, and its marked exclamatory prosody manifests the speaker's heightened emotional involvement while verbalizing it. In response to it, the caller does not continue with her ongoing action but rather begins a new action of opposing the host's argument, as indicated by the discourse marker *'aval* ('but')[14] and the content of lines 327–329. With this *nu*, the host celebrates both the caller's implied

---

14 *'aval* ('but') is one of the only Hebrew discourse markers which occasionally appear at non intonation-unit initial position, as it is found here.

agreement with him on the topic as well as the inner contradiction in her talk, arising from the fact that earlier on in the conversation (lines 200–201) she had explicitly claimed that public debate is not currently taking place. Celebrating an inner contradiction in an opponent's talk is a belittling move because it brings the opponent's weakness into relief. The host accomplishes this belittling move with a token of *nu*. Without it, the *me'a 'axuz*! ('great!') of line 326 could be interpreted here as lacking the belittling quality. Upon hearing this *nu*, and even before the host completes his 'great!', the caller immediately addresses her self-contradiction by giving an explanation which attempts to minimize it and even make it disappear altogether (lines 327–329).

This *nu* could be interpreted as hastening an implied metalingual action such as *nu, 'at lo ro'a sheze bidyuk soter 'et ma she'amart kodem vetomex bema sh'ani 'omer*? ('nu, don't you see that you're contradicting what you've just said and supporting my argument?'). The metalingual action of grasping the implications of her utterance which the caller is urged to perform here is clear from context; there is no need to verbalize it. All that is left is the belittling tone accompanying urging an implied metalingual action of this sort. Furthermore, since the situation of an opponent being urged to become aware of arguments that contradict what s/he had previously said is a fairly recurrent phenomenon in heated argument, applying the above theory of semantic change (Dahl 1985; Traugott 1999), we see how over time, *nu* might gain belittling qualities.

4.4 Contempt

Furthest beyond the extreme of belittling the addressee on the continuum of keys constructed for casual talk, we find cases of deep contempt constructed by *nu* in our radio corpus. Examine, for instance, the following interaction about long-lasting accusations of corruption directed against the prime minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, following his son's pleading guilty in a criminal trial concerning his violating the political parties' funding law:

Excerpt 7: 'Fathers and Sons' 4. 1. 06

```
147 Host:   ...mutar    lax    lehagid kol ma   she'at   rotsa,
             it's okay for you to say  all what that you want,
             'you can say whatever you want,'
148          ...rak 'ani,
             only I
             'I'm just,'
```

149   ...*menase*,
               am trying,
               'trying,'

150   ...*she..tedayki.*
               that you'll be accurate
               'for you to speak accurately.'

151   ...*haben   shelo--*,
               the son his
               'hi--s son,'

152   ..*Omri Sharon*,

153   ...*nexkar*,
               'was investigated,'

154   ..*hoda*,
               admitted
               'pleaded guilty,'

155   ...*baparasha   shel xok mimun   mifla*
               in the affair of   law funding partie
               'in the affair of the parties' funding la[w]'

156 Caller: *vehu-- 'eh*,
               'and he-- uh,'

157   *hu ha'aba   shelo.*
                              he the father his
                              'he's his father.'

158   /????????/

159 Host: '*a--h*,
               'o--h,'

160   *hevanti.*
               I understood.
               'I get it.'

161   '*az 'okey*,
               'so okay,'

162   '*az 'ani   ganav*
               'so I'm [a] thief'

163 Caller: *hu lo yodea klum*,
               he not know nothing
               'he [Ariel Sharon] doesn't know anything,'

164 Host: '*az 'ani*
                         'so I'

```
165        'az  'ani 'asiti    'averat       tnu'a,
            so   I've performed transgression transportation
           'so I've performed a traffic transgression,'
```

```
166 Caller: /hu ??????/.
            '/he ??????/.'
```

```
167 Host:   ..veyishlexu     'et    'aba   sheli,
              and they'll send DIR OBJ father my
              'and they'll send my father,'
```

```
168        ya'asu    lo   shlilat   rishayon.
           they'll do to him taking away license
           'they'll take away his driver license.'
```

```
169        'at       tsodeket.
           'you['re] right.'
```

```
170        nu,
```

```
171        ze-- logika nexona  shel xashiva.
           this logic  correct of   thinking
           'tha--t's sound (correct) logical thinking.'
```

```
172 Caller:                          betax      sheze   naxon.
                                     of course that it correct
                                     'of course it's correct.'
```

```
173 Host:   ..beseder,
             'fine,'
```

```
174 Caller: ken,
            'yes,'
```

```
175 Host:   ..'etslex  hakol          naxon.
             'with you everything [is] correct.'
```

```
176 Caller: 'eh ma,
            'uh what,'
```

```
177                                  hu lo  yodea
                                     he not know
                                     'he doesn't know'
```

```
           ma   shehaben    shelo 'ose?
           what that the son his   is doing
           'what his son is up to?'
```

```
178 Host:   ...nu be'emet,
              nu really
              'oh come on,'
```

```
179          ..yoter |retsini mize.
                'more |serious than this.'
180 Caller:        |tov.
                   |'fine.'
181                         lama levazbez 'et hazman?
                            why  to waste the time
                            'why waste time?'
182          ..'ani yesh    li    dvarim xashuvim  lehagid.
                   I   there is to me things important to say
                   'I I've got important things to say.'
183 Host:        nu.
184          ken,
             'right,'
185          me'od xashuvim.
             'very important.'
186 Caller:.....(deep breath)
187          ...'alef,
                'a (first letter of Hebrew alphabet),'
188          'ani rotsa lehagid,
             'I   want  to say,'
```

This interaction involves a caller who is a 'regular' to the program (Dori-Hacohen 2012b). Interactions with 'regulars' tend to be more extreme than with other callers, as hosts act more freely knowing the 'regular' will return to the program regardless of how he or she is treated (Dori-Hacohen 2012b). This caller began the interaction by urging the police to investigate the prime minister for corruption and to indict him, since his son had pleaded guilty in the affair. The host claims that the prime minister's son, Omri Sharon, had indeed pleaded guilty in the affair (lines 151–155). He is interrupted at mid-utterance (line 155), but based on the host's earlier (and subsequent) talk and the caller's acquaintance with him, it is clear (to us and to the caller), that the continuation of this utterance would have been something along the lines that this does not constitute sufficient grounds for incriminating the prime minister himself. However, before the host manages to complete his argument, the caller co-constructs (Lerner 1991): *vehu-- 'eh, hu ha'aba shelo* ('and he-- uh, he's his father', lines 156–157), implying that the son's pleading guilty incriminates the father since clearly, the father (and head of the party) knows about his son's misconduct.

This argument is met with strong disagreement and much irony on the part of the host, first with *'a--h, hevanti* ('oh, I get it', lines 159–160) and then via his absurd analogy *'az 'ani 'asiti 'averat tnu'a, veyishlexu 'et 'aba sheli, ya'asu lo shlilat rishayon* ('so I performed a traffic transgression, [...] and they'll send my father, they'll take away his driver license', lines 165–168). In other words, the host points out the ridiculousness of the son committing a crime and his father being punished for it.

The caller picks up on the irony already following his *'a--h, hevanti* ('oh, I get it', lines 159–160), and responds with irony of her own: *hu lo yodea klum* ('he [the father] doesn't know anything', line 163); according to her, the father (as head of the party), Ariel Sharon, was perfectly aware of his son's political funding corruption. In order to point out the absurdity of his analogy, the host, with dripping irony, adds: *'at tsodeket. nu, ze-- logika nexona shel xashiva* ('you're right. *nu*, that's sound (correct) logical thinking', lines 169–171). This non-stand-alone *nu* intensifies his irony and contempt. Without it (in a different context), such an utterance could have been interpreted literally. Again, the caller does not respond to this *nu* token as to a hastener of her ongoing action. Instead, she counters with *betax sheze naxon* ('of course it's correct', line 172), only to be met with the host's further contempt: *beseder, 'etslex hakol naxon* ('fine, with you everything is correct', lines 173, 175), an utterance also alluding to the host's long-term acquaintance with this caller's opinions. As the old saying goes, 'familiarity breeds contempt'.

At this point, the caller asks *ma, hu lo yodea ma shehaben shelo 'ose?* ('what, he doesn't know what his son is up to?', lines 176–177), leading to the final escalation of contempt in the host's *nu be'emet* ('*nu*, really', roughly equivalent to, but far more contemptuous than, English 'oh come on', line 178), a cluster of two discourse markers expressing unmitigated reprimand (Maschler and Estlein 2008), derision, and contempt, preceding his request that she begin talking more seriously than she has up until now (line 179).

At this point, the caller indeed abandons this topic and, following the host's demand, attempts to move on to another topic: *tov. lama levazbez 'et hazman*? *'ani yesh li dvarim xashuvim lehagid* ('fine. why waste time? I I've got important things to say', lines 180–182). However, the host counters this apparent cooperation with his demand with *nu. ken, me'od xashuvim* ('*nu*. right, very important', lines 183–185). This is indeed *nu* granting her permission to move on to the next topic, but everything that had happened up until now in the interaction, along with his accompanying irony (*ken, me'od xashuvim* 'right, very important'), all contribute to a highly contemptuous key accompanying this sequential *nu*.

Indeed, the sequential token in line 183 is another exception manifesting a non-stand-alone sequential *nu* (Table 3, section 4.2). Again, we see how an

utterance functioning in the sequential realm might come to have also keying functions in the discourse: If the situation of allowing an interlocutor to perform an action (continue her talk) is repetitively accompanied by irony and contempt (as may often be the case in heated argumentative discourse), over time, the sequential token may become associated with contemptuous hues to the point of acquiring them regardless of the sequential function.

The contempt here is strong enough to cause the caller to pause for almost 2 seconds and take a deep breath (line 186) before moving on. However, the caller, being a 'regular', continues the interaction in spite of the disdain.

Contemptuous *nu* is not restricted to the host's talk. In Excerpt 8, the caller, another 'regular', is in the midst of complaining about the Minister of Defense for betraying the Israeli causes by leaning too much to the left. Such people, she asserts, are not fit to represent the nation. The host counters her argument with:

Excerpt 8: 'The Minister of Defense' 9. 3. 05

```
146 Host:                   hevanti.
                            'I get it.'

147       'ani yaxol rak  lish'ol she'ela?
          I    can   just ask     question
          'may I just ask you a question?'

148       kedey sheyihiye   li    reka--,
          so    that will be to me background
          'so that I have a wider backgrou--nd,'

149       ..raxav yoter,
            wide   more
            '(wider),'

150       legabey    ma   she'at 'omeret?
          'concerning what you're saying?'

151       ...yesh lax    'ulay de'a--,
             is    to you maybe opinion
             'do you perhaps have an opinio--n,'

152       ...kama      leylo--t,
             'how many ni--ghts,'

153       ...kama      pe'ulo--t,
             'how many army opera--tions,'

154       ...bekama      yexidot muvxaro--t,
             in how many units   special
             'in how many special u--nits,'
```

```
155         ..sheret sar      habitaxon?
              served minister of defense
              'the minister of defense has served?'

156         'o  she--stam    'at 'eh
             or that merely you uh
             'or are you ju--st uh'

157         s'tomeret ma--
            'I mean   wha--t'

158 Caller:          so wha--t?
                     {in English}

159         nu 'az ma--?
            'nu so wha--t?'

160 Host:              loydea,
                       'I dunno,'

161 Caller:            'az ze marshe lo,
                       so  it allows him
                       'so does this allow him,'

162         'et     hateruf      haze 'axshav?
            DIR OBJ the insanity this  now
            'this insanity now?'
```

The host employs an elaborate *pre-* (lines 147–150) to secure his turn at talk. In his pre-question (Schegloff 1980) he inserts both the mitigating *rak* ('just') in *'ani yaxol rak lish'ol she'ela*? ('may I just ask you a question?', line 151) as well as an explanation for his following question. Hosts generally do not give accounts for asking questions as this is their institutional role. Both features of this *pre-* therefore suggest that the host knows this caller is a non-cooperating one (Dori-Hacohen 2011).[15] In his question, the host asks the caller if she has considered the myriad of special army operations which the Minister of Defense has participated in (lines 151–155), thus suggesting that her criticism of the minister is unwarranted and that her claim that he should not represent the nation cannot be accepted. In response, the caller vehemently rejects the host's question as irrelevant. She responds with *'az ze marshe lo, 'et hateruf haze 'axshav*? ('so does this [i. e., the countless special operations the minister has participated in] allow him this insanity now?'), but not before preceding it with both English *so what?* as well as Hebrew *nu 'az ma?*

---

15 The host indeed ends this interaction by disconnecting the caller, a rare occurrence in the corpus (see Dori-Hacohen 2012a).

('*nu* so what?'). This Israeli caller not only rejects the worthiness of the host's argument. She also takes the opportunity to manifest her contempt towards him for having a different opinion. It is the Hebrew cluster in particular – the second one in the sequence – which delivers the more contemptuous tone, and *nu*, the only component with no 'equivalent' in the immediately preceding English cluster, plays the crucial role in constructing this contempt.

This excerpt also suggests that it is not only hosts who employ contemptuous *nu* towards callers, but callers, too – and especially regular callers (Dori-Hacohen 2012b) – may employ a similar practice to act contemptuously toward their host, albeit much less frequently (see Table 2).

5 Discussion

We began this inquiry with the goal of further investigating the functions and grammaticization path of Hebrew *nu*. We have demonstrated that the study of the discourse marker *nu* in the political phone-in radio program reveals subtleties of key constructed by *nu* which are not found in the casual conversation database. Thus we have expanded our understanding of the ways this discourse marker can be employed in interaction.

We have seen that the most striking difference between *nu* in casual talk as opposed to *nu* in the radiophonic data has to do with its keying function. While this function is manifested by less than a fourth of all casual talk cases, in the radio programs, over half the tokens carry this function. Interestingly, the study of Icelandic *nú* has revealed a related pattern. Hilmisdóttir (2007, see also this volume) has studied over fourteen hours of Icelandic discourse, both everyday conversations as well as a call-in radio program. She shows that this token functions in three categories throughout her data: as a temporal marker, tone particle, and utterance particle. The finding relevant for our purposes concerns tone particles, "particles that do not have a semantico-referential function but instead modify the whole utterance by giving it a certain tone" (2007: 48). She finds that Icelandic *nú* "give[s] the utterance in which it occurs a decisive tone" (2007: 228). While the everyday conversations in her database manifest a frequency of between 0.16 and 0.17 tokens of tone *nú* particles per minute, the call-in program manifests a frequency of 1.48 tokens per minute. Hilmisdóttir attributes this difference to "the activities in which the interlocutors are engaged. [...] [A]rgumentative discourse is one of the main environments in which the tone particle *nú* is employed" (2007: 151). Similarly, we have seen that the political phone-in programs investigated in our study are highly argumentative (see further Dori-Hacohen 2012a).

We have delved more deeply into the structural features of *nu* as they relate to its sequential and keying functions. These explorations have shed some new light on the question of how a sequential element might come to function also in the affective realm of discourse.

This is not the only case of a sequential token acquiring affective functions in discourse. Kasterpalu and Keevallik have analyzed the information receipt token *ahah* in third position in Estonian conversation, which is employed to mark "the gap between what the asker of the question knew before and what he/she just learned as a result of the answer" (2010). They show that when the epistemic gap is large, there is an accompanying affective dimension to the receipt token, and its prosodic qualities change from neutral *ahah* to the heavily marked surprise token *ah(h)aa*. Thus, news receipt is not just about knowledge, but about the emotions accompanying it as well. Similarly, Tanaka has shown that the Japanese response token *hee*, in addition to its usage as a newsmark, continuer, and assessment (Mori 2006) "has further uses in displaying *appreciation* for the cumulative epistemic coherence [...] of an informing in the light of other information or knowledge available to the *hee* producer" (2010, emphasis ours). Estonian *ahah* and Japanese *hee*, then, are two more instances of sequential tokens having acquired affective functions as well.

However, the two studies above have not sought to explore the processes by which a sequential token might come to have also affective functions. Studies performed within the CA framework do not usually attempt to answer the question of how an utterance performing some action may come to perform also another action (but see Heritage 2014). In our study we have turned to grammaticization theory (Hopper 1987; Traugott 1989, 1995, 1999, 2003; Hopper and Traugott 2003) in order to account for this phenomenon of language change.

Maschler (2003, 2009: 75–77) explores the phenomenon of sequential *nu* acquiring keying functions. In those studies, urging some implied metalingual utterance was posited in order to explain the change (see section 4.1 above). The following implied metalingual actions urged explain the various keying tokens seen throughout this study:

Table 4: Metalingual actions urged by keying *nu* tokens

Excerpt	Key	Metalingual Action Urged
4	ridiculing	realization of ridiculousness of opponent's argument
6	belittling	realization of opponent's self-contradiction + speaker's celebration of it
7, line 170	contempt	realization of irony in speaker's talk
7, line 178	contempt	stopping opponent's non-serious argument (in speaker's judgement)
8	contempt	very strong rejection of opponent's argument

Since the metalingual action urged is clear from context, there is no need to verbalize it, a situation resulting in the fact that the speaker most often verbalizes only the *nu* token urging that metalingual action, and attaches it to the following utterance. This in turn results in non-stand-alone keying *nu*.

In the present study, a closer look at the structural properties of stand-alone vs. non-stand-alone *nu* tokens (section 4.2) revealed an explanation not necessitating (but also not contradicting) such a hypothesized metalingual utterance. The tones on the disaligned extreme of the key continuum (Figure 2) (belittling and contempt) stem from the inherent impatience in attempting to control an interlocutor's actions (i.e., hastening and urging). This move is relatively unmitigated in these programs (unlike the majority of casual conversation cases) therefore resulting in affects on the disaligned extreme. Such tones originate also in the contempt often accompanying the action of reluctantly allowing an opponent to continue his/her talk in a heated argument (e.g., Excerpt 7, line 183). The tones on the aligned extreme (joking, humorously mocking) originate from the fact that in certain contexts (e.g., Excerpt 5), impatient actions are mitigated by compensatory humor and mockery, but such contexts are scarce in these political call-in programs. Over time, if the sequential action and its accompanying tone (from joking to contempt) are repeated over and over again, we have argued that by way of pragmatic strengthening of a connotation, a form acquires a new linguistic function (Dahl 1985; Traugott 1995, 1999), and sequential *nu* begins to acquire the affective meanings, which eventually become dissociated from the sequential ones. In this way, a token starting out as a sequential one may become an affective token.

One possible objection to this argument might be that *nu* is simply acquiring the key of the surrounding discourse, regardless of the impatience inherent to its sequential functions. This claim is disproven by the fact that *nu* does not acquire just any key from the surrounding discourse (such as the tone of despair in Excerpt 2, line 309, for instance) but specifically the keys represented in Figure 2 which can all be traced back to the basic impatience inherent to attempting to control another's actions – by far the most frequent function of *nu* in casual talk, and most likely the primary one (as attested also by Avneyon 1998, who classifies *nu* as an 'urging word').

The grammaticization path hypothesized here is supported by two more properties characterizing grammaticization – subjectification and intersubjectivization. In the process of grammaticization, discourse markers become "increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief/state/attitude toward the proposition" (Traugott 1989: 35), and then more intersubjective, i.e., more concerned with the 'self' of the addressee (Traugott 2003). By introducing the

speaker's stance towards the addressee's arguments, keying *nu* is far more subjective and intersubjective than sequential *nu*.

Our study illuminates a special type of grammaticization, one involving emotion in discourse. One of the most common processes accompanying grammaticization is semantic loss or bleaching (Gabelentz 1891; Lehman 1995 [1982]), as, e.g., when an element such as *bekitsur* ('anyway', lit. 'in short') loses its referential meaning related to the concept of 'shortness' and becomes a discourse marker employed to foreground subsequent discourse (Maschler 2009). Since in Hebrew, *nu* is a non-referential item to begin with, no semantic loss is involved in our case. Here we find something altogether different – a case of grammaticization in which a non-referential item has acquired affective meaning. Affective meaning is, of course, very different from referential meaning. On the one hand, no reference to the extralingual world (Becker 1979) is involved; on the other – prosody plays a much more crucial role. Affect is also tied more tightly to the general key of the particular context in which the form occurs. Over recurrent use in similar contexts, however, and in keeping with current theories of semantic change (Traugott 1995), we have suggested that tokens become dissociated from the particular context, so that Hebrew speakers come to associate specific affects with this token.

6 *Nu* in the early period of revival of spoken Hebrew

Our study so far was based on a synchronic analysis of contemporary spoken Hebrew. In the remainder of this chapter, we expand our analysis both diachronically and from the perspective of language contact.

6.1 A diachronic view: Affect in *nu* prior to its borrowing into Hebrew

There are no studies of *nu* and its equivalents based on naturally-occurring conversation in Yiddish, Russian, or Polish prior to its borrowing into Hebrew, but there is some evidence suggesting that it had both sequential and affective meanings already before being imported into Hebrew (see also the chapters in this volume by Matras and Reeshemius [Yiddish], Bolden [Russian], Sawicki [Polish], and Wiedner [Polish]). For instance, Rosten describes Yiddish *nu* as "the verbal equivalent of a sigh, a frown, a grin, a grunt, or a sneer. It is an expression of amusement or recognition or uncertainty or disapproval. It can be used fondly, acidly, tritely, belligerently. [...] It can convey pride, deliver scorn, demand response" (2003 [1968]: 397).

Whereas the last function listed by Rosten pertains more to the sequential realm, all others are affective.

Wierzbicka (1976) and Kryk (1992) describe a variety of functions for Polish *no*, including the sequential functions of stimulating the hearer to act and encouraging the hearer to continue his/her utterance (Kryk 1992: 204), as well as some functions which Kryk claims correspond to English 'well' or are "equivalent to emphatic expressions, such as *this is what I mean/that's it*, etc." and function therefore in the affective realm, e. g.:

> *Chodzi o analizę języka mówionego, **no**!*

> 'They mean the analysis of spoken language, **that's it**!' (Kryk 1992: 203).

In an autobiographical novel published in Hebrew in 2004 by a Polish woman born in 1937 who remained in Poland with her parents until 1949, we find the following description of her mother's condescending attitude towards other postwar Polish Jews who had survived the Holocaust, a description the author constructs in the mother's voice:

> *kaxa ze haya 'etslenu, haya kavod vehayta rama, lo kmo kol miney 'anashim shexazru xayim mehamilxama ufit'om hem mesaprim kama hayu mexubadim ve'ashirim lifney hamilxama [...]. sipurim, sipurim vesipurim, **la'aga 'ima sheli betuv-lev salxani**: ze haya besax hakol soxer dagim masrixim, ze lo kara sefer 'exad baxayim shelo, lezot 'eyn kultura bixlal, ve'aba shela, ba'ayara, haya mekaneax 'et ha'af bishtey 'etsbe'otav. **no**? 'eyfo hem ve'eyfo 'anaxnu?* (Frankel 2004: 95).

> 'This is how it was in our family, there was dignity and there were high standards, not like all sorts of people who returned alive from the war and suddenly they tell how dignified and wealthy they used to be before the war, [...]. "Stories, stories, stories", my mother would **mock in forgiving kind-heartedness**: "this one was just a stinky-fish dealer, that one had never read a book his entire life, this one [FEM] has no culture, and her father, in the village, used to wipe his nose with his two fingers. **no**[16]? Where are they and where are we?"' (Frankel 2004: 95, translation and emphasis ours).

Note the strategy of language alternation at the discourse marker in question (Brody 1987; Maschler 1988, 1994, 2000; Salmons 1990; Matras 1998) in this Modern Hebrew novel – Polish *no* as opposed to Hebrew *nu*, conveying the diaspora flavor of the mother's (most likely Polish) talk via this affective marker

---

16 This word appears with its voweling in the text. Modern Hebrew novels are generally not vowelled, unless there is some doubt as to pronunciation. Thus we know with certainty that we are dealing with Polish *no* as opposed to Hebrew *nu*.

delivering mockery here, as attested by the author's sentence introducing this constructed dialogue (Tannen 2007[1989]). It is precisely the similarity in form and function with Hebrew *nu* which enables this author to employ a Polish word in a Hebrew novel.

Although the majority of functions mentioned by Multisilta (1995) and Grenoble (1998) for Russian *nu* seem to belong in the sequential realm ("to introduce a new topic, or signal the continuation of a previously established, activated topic", Grenoble 1998: 181), Multisilta mentions that 3.5 % of all tokens in her database perform an emotive function, but she refrains from illustrating them in her article (1995: 385, 391).

Both sequential and affective functions, then, seem to have been performed by *nu* in the languages of origin. However, when such particles are borrowed into a new language and culture, although the form of the particle may be taken over, its discourse functions are not always borrowed as well. For instance, judging by the Hebrew spoken by recent Russian immigrants to Israel, there is some evidence of different usage of *nu* in Russian compared to Hebrew. These speakers employ *nu* much more frequently than do Israeli Hebrew speakers, and they often employ *nu* to mitigate an utterance in a manner which is not employed in Hebrew (Mazo and Voloshin 1999; Maschler 2009).

6.2 *Nu* in Early Modern Hebrew

There is no way to prove our suggested grammaticization path directly, since recordings of an earlier period of borrowing (when *nu* might have functioned exclusively sequentially but not affectively) do not exist. Furthermore, as discussed in 6.1, already in the languages of origin (at least in Yiddish, Russian, and Polish), before being borrowed into Hebrew, *nu/no* seem to have had both sequential and affective functions. This can be seen also when examining written discourse from the early period of revival of the Hebrew language. In what follows, we will show that both sequential and affective functions were borrowed from the contact languages when *nu* was imported into Hebrew, but that whereas the sequential functions are still alive in contemporary Modern Hebrew, not all affective functions from the languages of origin are.

Modern Hebrew was revived as a spoken language towards the end of the 19th century, but it was revived as a literary language in Europe beginning already in the mid-18th century. Since we do not have recordings of Hebrew from those days, we turned to the database of the *Historical Dictionary* compiled by the Hebrew Language Academy, in particular its Early Modern Hebrew section

(1750–1932)[17]. In the section of this database examined, consisting of 315 literary (novels, short stories, and plays), scientific, and journalistic texts, we find 518 tokens of *nu*, almost all of them in constructed dialogues within literary texts.

The earliest *nu* token in the corpus, and the only one from the 19th century, is from 1896, just a few years following the time the language was beginning to be used again as a spoken language. This token appears in the Hebrew novel *The Travels of Binyamin the Third* by the author known by the pen name of Mendele Moxer Sfarim ('Mendele the Book Seller') (1836–1917). His real name was Sholem Yankev Abramovich, a Yiddish and Hebrew novelist from a small town near Minsk (a Polish region annexed by Russia in 1793), who moved to Odessa in 1881 and was instrumental in reviving modern literary Hebrew. Mendele insisted on revival not along the lines of Biblical Hebrew, but rather along those of medieval and later Hebrew, as well as of European languages, particularly Yiddish.[18] Interestingly, and in keeping with what we know about discourse markers in language contact situations, the earliest *nu* token appearing in this corpus is found in a code-switched utterance in a Ukrainian dialect,[19] where a Ukrainian villager addresses the Jew Binyamin. Just prior to this conversation, Binyamin, who had been wandering in the woods at night, had fainted out of fear of an approaching villager in a carriage. When he wakes up, he finds himself well taken care of by that villager, lying in his carriage covered by a blanket, with food beside him. At this point Binyamin begins to sigh some very heavy sighs:

Excerpt 9: 'Binyamin the Third'

hakafri   hafax panav   'el binyamin,
the villager turned his face to Binyamin
'the villager turned to Binyamin,'

ksheshama   'oto ne'enak umit'aneax,
'when he heard him groan   and moan,'

nitkarev   'elav   beraxamim
'came closer to him with pity'

ve'amar   lo   bela'"az:
'and said to him in the language of the *goyim* ('non-Jews'):'

---

17 We thank Dr. Doron Rubinstein from the Hebrew Language Academy for granting us access to the yet unpublished parts of this database and for help with extracting all tokens of *nu*.
18 Mendele was also instrumental in turning Yiddish from a spoken into a literary language.
19 We thank Michael Ryzhik and Lea Sawicki for help with the translation from this Ukrainian dialect.

```
-  nu  židko,     a   čto,  troški  lepše?
   'nu little Jew,  so what,  a little better?'
```

```
(ma   yehudi, ravax                    lexa   me'at?)
 what Jew,   3 MASC SG.become less heavy for you little
'(what Jew, are you a little better?)'
```

<div align="right">(Mendele Moxer Sfarim 1896: 13)</div>

We are fortunate to have the author's own translation into Hebrew of this Ukrainian code-switched utterance. From the fact that he chose to translate it with what he viewed as a reasonable equivalent (the interrogative *ma* 'what' employed as a discourse marker), we learn that in 1896, the author judged *nu* not to constitute a Hebrew lexeme. In Modern Hebrew, however, this employment of the discourse marker *ma* is non-native-like (we return to *ma* below). This is a non-stand-alone *nu* functioning affectively to construct the villager's pitying tone, as attested by the preceding *beraxamin* ('with pity').

Another example is dated 1900 and comes from a translation by the Hebrew writer Gnessin (1879–1913), born in Starodub, also in the Ukraine, of a Yiddish short story written by Mordechai Spektor. Here, two seventeen-year-old young women, best friends, are in the midst of an unpleasant conversation in which Reyzeleh has begun to blame Pereleh for something and immediately regrets her words. However, Pereleh will not let her stop and urges her to continue:

Excerpt 10: 'Two Young Women'

```
'ulam pereleh lo  hirpeta 'od  mimena:
but   Pereleh not let go  more from her
'but Pereleh wouldn't let go of her:'
```

```
-  nu  hagidi, nu dabri, nu ma   'ashamti?
   'nu say,    nu speak, nu what have I done wrong?'
```

<div align="right">(Spektor 1900: 9)</div>

Four years following Mendele's example, Yiddish *nu* is already translated with Hebrew *nu*. In the first two occurrences here, we see the Modern Hebrew sequential function of *nu* as a hastener of the explicit metalingual actions 'say' and 'speak'. The third token, carrying an affective provoking tone, also hastens an implied metalingual utterance such as '*nu* tell me, what have I done wrong?'. Although particularly the first two are hastening tokens, they are not stand-alone ones. This is likely due to the turn-initial position of hastening *nu* in Yiddish (Matras and Reershemius, this volume; Assouline 2011) and possibly also of *no* in

Polish (Sawicki, this volume), as well as to differences in the medium: In written discourse, more contextualization is necessary compared to face-to-face interaction.

Support for such an implied metalingual utterance comes from comparing the Hebrew with the original Yiddish version.[20] Interestingly, in Yiddish we find only a single *nu* in Pereleh's utterance:

Excerpt 10a: 'Two Young Women' (in original Yiddish)

```
nor Perele hot     shoin  nit opgetreten.
but Perele 3SG.have anymore not given up
'but Perele didn't give up anymore.'
```

```
- nu, zog, mit  vos bin ich shuldig?
  nu  say  with what am  I   guilty?
  'nu, tell me, what am I guilty of?'
```

<div align="right">(Spektor 1919[21]: 8)</div>

Whereas in Yiddish there is only a single hastening of the explicit metalingual action *zog* 'say', in Hebrew the urging is intensified by hastening this action twice (*hagidi* 'say', *dabri* 'speak'). This is then followed by *nu* preceding the actual question whose answer is urged – *ma 'ashamti*? ('what have I done wrong?'), lending a provoking key to the Hebrew utterance, i.e., functioning affectively. Since the Yiddish version does not include an affective *nu* directly preceding the question *mit vos bin ich shuldig?* ('what am I guilty of?'), we must conclude that Gnessin did not translate any affective use of Yiddish *nu* here but rather, in order to intensify Pereleh's urging of Reyzeleh, extended the hastening function of the *nu* preceding the metalingual action *zog* 'say' not only to another verb of saying (*dabri* 'speak') but also to an implied metalingual utterance, such as 'tell me', urging the recipient to answer. In this particular context, urging the recipient to answer such a question results in a provoking key.

The earliest original Hebrew use of *nu* in the written corpus hastens a non-verbal action. It is found in a Hebrew short story published in 1900 by the Ukrainian-born writer (and close friend of Gnessin's) Brenner (1881–1921). The token appears in the constructed dialogue of a Jew of somewhat shady character

---

20 We thank Maya Inbar for locating the original Yiddish text and providing us with its gloss.

21 The year 1919 is the publication date of the only Yiddish edition of the story we were able to find. It was obviously written before 1900, when Gnessin's translation was published. Our analysis is based on the assumption that this Yiddish edition and the one used by Gnessin are alike with respect to this utterance.

to the narrator, who speaks in the voice of a young Jew newly arrived in town. The shady local offers the newly-arrived a place to sleep:

Excerpt 11: 'A Place for the Night'

```
- lelinat    layla harey 'ata tsarix, baxur?
  for sleep night PART   you need,   lad?
  'are you in need of a place for the night, lad?'

ha?  beveyti..    heyxan    xafatseyxa?
'huh? at my place.. where [is] your luggage?'

'eyn      lexa?
NEG EXIST to you
'you haven't any?'

nu, hatelex  'imi?        ma?
'nu, will you come with me? what?'

halaxti.
'I went.'
```

(Brenner 1900: 17)

Nu here hastens a question concerning the non-verbal action 'come with me'. It appears in conjunction with the interrogative *ma* ('what') (which we have also seen translating the Ukrainian *nu* of Excerpt 9 above), both of which frame the shady character's question *hatelex 'imi?* ('will you come with me?'). Interestingly, both *nu* and *ma* can be interpreted as urging the same implied metalingual utterance *ma 'ata 'omer* '**what** do you say' in this context.[22] In other words, the metalingual action is urged twice, each time with a different component – first with *nu*, the second time with *ma*. Inserting the implied metalingual utterances, we get:

```
nu [ma 'ata 'omer],  hatelex      'imi?   ma  ['ata 'omer]?
'nu [what do you say], will you come with me? what [do you say]?'
```

---

22 A reviewer suggests that this *nu* is not linked to a metalingual utterance because it urges a non-verbal action. However, *nu* only urges this action indirectly. A direct urge would be via the imperative form of the verb in non-question intonation (cf. excerpt 10), whereas here we find the future form preceded by the interrogative marker *ha-* in question intonation 'will you come with me?'. This question makes relevant a yes/no answer preceding the performance of the urged action ('to come with'). Furthermore, the following *ma?* ('what?') also makes a verbal, rather than a non-verbal response relevant.

Inserting this same metalingual utterance will also work for Mendele's Hebrew translation of the Ukrainian *nu* (Excerpt 9):

nu [**ma**   'ata 'omer] yehudi, ravax lexa me'at?
'**nu** [**what** do you say] Jew,   are you a little better?'

Recall that Mendele chose to translate this *nu* with *ma*:

Excerpt 9: 'Binyamin the Third' (partial)

- **nu** židko,   a čto, troški   lepše?
  '**nu** little Jew, so what, a little better?'

(**ma** yehudi, ravax   lexa   me'at?)
what Jew,   3 MASC SG.become less heavy for you little
'(**what** Jew, are you a little better?)'

(Mendele Moxer Sfarim 1896: 13)

The implied metalingual utterance may thus shed some light on Mendele's translation of Ukrainian *nu* with Hebrew *ma*.

Sequential *nu* is found in this corpus not only as a hastener but also as a 'go ahead'. In a 1904 short story which Gnessin published in Hebrew, we find the following dialogue between a master and his servant, Theodor:

Excerpt 12: Master and Servant

- hayode'a 'ata, te'odor, 'et   'asher 'avakshexa?
  know   you Theodor DIR OBJ COMPLT I will ask you
  'do you know, Theodor, what I will ask you?'

- **nu**?

- haxina na   li   'aruxa...
  prepare please for me meal
  'prepare a meal for me please...'

(Gnessin 1904: 81)

As a response to the master's *pre-*, Theodor responds with *nu* as 'go ahead'. The master then proceeds to make his request.

Sequential *nu* is even found in this corpus in self-repair in the midst of a word search, as shown in the following excerpt from a play published in 1907 by Brenner:

Excerpt 13: Dilettantism

```
- mipney ma   hinxa        mema'en letargem    'et    ze?
  for   what 2 MASC SG COP refuse  to translate DEF OBJ this
  'why do you refuse to translate this?'
```

```
- mipney  shezohi... shezohi... shezohi... nu, diletantiyut.
  'because it's...   it's...    it's...    nu, dilettantism.'
```

<div align="right">(Brenner 1907: 130)</div>

This token appears after three tries at recalling the word *diletantiyut* ('dilet-tantism'), and this type of *nu* has been analyzed as the speaker hastening her-/himself to recall a word (Maschler 2009: 50; cf. Matras and Reershemius, this volume, section 3; Sawicki, this volume, section 6.1; Keevallik, this volume, section 3.3). This hastening use, then, is borderline between self-urging a verbal and a non-verbal action, and it is similar to the one hastener of a non-verbal action in the radio corpus (Table 1), which also occurs in the midst of self-repair.

Thus, from this written corpus we learn that in the early days of revival of spoken Hebrew, *nu* was already employed in all of the functions found in our spoken Modern Hebrew corpora (Table 1): urging further development of an ongoing topic (Excerpts 10 and 14 below), hastening a non-verbal action (Excerpt 11 and possibly Excerpt 13), granting permission to perform an action (Excerpt 12), and as a keying token (Excerpts 10, 14, and 15 below). Thus, when *nu* was initially imported into Modern Hebrew, it had already had both sequential and affective functions, which – we must conclude – existed in the languages of origin as well, in this case, Ukrainian and Yiddish.

Furthermore, that some tokens of *nu* in the languages of origin carried both sequential and affective functions simultaneously is proven in the following excerpt from a 1901 book by Mendele. In this story, which took place in some East European city, a certain 'clerk' (and therefore most likely not a Jew) approaches the gate of a city hospital in a carriage, asking the concierge for the supervisor. When he finally arrives, the clerk asks him (certainly not in Hebrew) whether there is any space in the hospital for two people. The supervisor proceeds to give a very lengthy answer concerning the small size of the hospital in relation to the size of the town and the many discussions of this matter around town, to which the clerk responds:

Excerpt 14: 'Several Meanings'

- *nu*?!

kol   havara   zo,   sheyats'a   mipi
sound syllable this, that came out of mouth
'the sound of this syllable, coming out of the mouth'

ze, shekor'im   lo pakid,
this that they call him clerk
'of the one, called 'clerk','

hayu bemashma'uta   kama vexama hora'ot.
EXIST in meaning.POSS few and few senses
'carried several meanings.'

mashma she'ela:
meaning question
'meaning a question:'

ha'im yehe   kets lefitputexa?
INTERG will be end to babbling.POSS
'will there be an end to your babbling?'

mashma   tameha:
'meaning 'bewildered':'

'im ken lo titkabel   bakashati!
so   not will be granted request.POSS
'so my request will not be granted!'

mashma ta'aromot umashma   'od dvarim harbe.
meaning slyness   and meaning more things many
'meaning slyness and meaning many more things.'

hamashgiax [...]   haya to'em be'oto kol   havara
the supervisor [...] tasted   in that sound of syllable
'the supervisor [...] tasted in that single syllable sound'

kol hate'amim beyaxad vexafaz   lehitratsot   lo
'all the flavors together and hastened to carry favor with him'

ve'amar: [...] benogea levakashatxa
'and said:[...] as for your request'

'eshtadel lemalota   maxar
'I'll try to fulfill it tomorrow.'

(Mendele Moxer Sfarim 1901: 307–308)

Mendele spells out the interpretation of this token of *nu* both in the sequential and the affective dimensions. The first meaning, 'will there be an end to your babbling?', is the sequential function of hastening the interlocutor to get to the point finally. The second and third meanings are the affective functions of bewilderment and slyness. The author adds that 'many other things' were conveyed by this *nu* (cf. the passage about Yiddish *nu* from Rosten 2003 [1968]: 397 quoted above). Indeed, writes Mendele, the recipient of this *nu* 'tasted in that single syllable sound all the flavors together' and hastened to attempt to fulfill the clerk's request for two hospital beds. In other words, he responded to the clerk's hastening, but also to his affective tones. This excerpt thus documents the crucial stage in grammaticization in which a single form carries more than one function simultaneously (Traugott 1999). Since the conversation is only reported in Hebrew but presumably took place in some East European language, we can safely conclude that *nu* could carry both sequential and affective functions simultaneously in the European language in which the clerk and supervisor conversed.

On the other hand, not all keying functions of *nu* found in this corpus of Early Modern Hebrew are still alive in contemporary Hebrew. Similarly to the *nu* of Excerpt 14, the following excerpt, from the same book by Gnessin (Excerpt 12), documents the use of *nu* for expressing bewilderment, an emotion no longer expressed by *nu* in contemporary Hebrew. This excerpt is written in the voice of a young woman who enters the house of some wealthy Mr. Gildin with her male friend for a social visit attended by several other people sitting in the living room. Immediately upon entering the room, the friend changes his mind:

Excerpt 15: 'Bewilderment'

```
le'ozneynu higi'a kol  xaveri   ro'ed,
to our ears reached voice my friend shivering
'the shivering voice of my friend reached our ears,'

megamgem   bimhirut   mevulbala:
stuttering in rapidness confused
'stuttering in confused rapidness:'

'anoxi... be'etsem...silxu na...  siba   bilti tsfuya...
I         actually   excuse please reason not   expected
'I...actually...please excuse...an unexpected reason...'

lo 'uxal       lihiyot hayom...
not will be able to be   today
'I won't be able to be here today...'
```

```
- nu! - huka       mar gildin betimahon
  nu!   was struck Mr. Gildin with bewilderment
- 'nu! – Mr. Gildin was struck with bewilderment'

be'et   'axat 'imanu.
at time one   with us
'at the same time as we were.'
```

<div align="right">(Gnessin 1904: 6)</div>

We are fortunate to have the author's own interpretation of this token of *nu*, as he follows it with the appropriate punctuation indicating that it was uttered by Mr. Gildin as he *huka betimahon* ('was struck with bewilderment'). Of all 163 *nu* tokens found in casual conversation (Maschler 2009) and in our radio corpus, not a single token functions to convey bewilderment. Furthermore, this use seems non-native-like to a Modern Israeli Hebrew ear. This is true also for the *nu* token constructing the pitying tone of Excerpt 9. Thus we see that not all affective uses from the languages of origin have 'made it' into contemporary Hebrew.

Form this survey of *nu* in the early days of revival of the Hebrew language, we learn that certain sequential and affective functions of *nu* in the contact languages were imported into Hebrew. The language was then still too young and employed by too few speakers to develop its own profile of uses for its discourse markers. As more speakers started to use Hebrew in a wider array of communicative contexts, the discourse marker began to acquire a profile of uses particular to the newly emerging Israeli culture. In the case of *nu*, changes happened especially in the affective realm. Certain affects conveyed by *nu/no* in the contact languages were lost in the new language. Only further research carefully documenting the particular affects constructed by *nu/no* in the contact languages will determine whether other, new shades of affect came into being for Hebrew *nu*. Based on a synchronic analysis, we have argued that in Hebrew, these shades stem from the inherent impatience in attempting to control an interlocutor's actions (i. e., hastening and urging) – by far the most frequent function of Hebrew *nu* in casual talk. Whether this grammaticization path is relevant also to the contact languages is still an open question.

In any event, the emotive functions and grammaticization paths in the languages of origin are only partially relevant to the study of the grammaticization of Hebrew *nu*, because, as we have attempted to show throughout this study, it is the language games (Wittgenstein 1958) repeated over and over again in the particular culture which determine the affective uses of the borrowed item, eventually leading to the grammaticization of a specific range of affects that *nu* may lend to the Hebrew utterance it accompanies.

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Databases

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Appendix: Transcription and Glossing Conventions

Each line denotes an intonation unit (Chafe 1994) and is followed by an English gloss. Where this gloss is not close enough to an English utterance, it is followed by a third line supplying a usually literal (but sometimes functional) translation. Utterances under consideration (mostly *nu* tokens) are given in **boldface**.

Transcription basically follows Chafe (1994), with a few additions:

. . .	half second pause (each extra dot = another 1/2 second)
. .	perceptible pause of less than half a second
(3.56)	measured pause of 3.56 seconds
,	comma at end of line/continuing intonation ('more to come')
.	period at end of line/sentence final falling intonation
?	question mark at end of line/sentence final rising intonation, 'appeal intonation' (Du Bois, Cumming, Schuetze-Coburn, and Paolino 1992)
!	exclamation mark at end of line/sentence final exclamatory intonation
∅	lack of punctuation at end of line/a fragmentary intonation unit, one which never reached completion.
--	elongation of preceding vowel sound
⌐	square bracket to the left of two consecutive lines indicates beginning of overlapping speech, two speakers talking at once
	alignment such that the right of the top line is placed over the left of the bottom line indicates latching, no interturn pause
pp	*pianissimo* (spoken very softly) (other musical notation as needed).
/??????/	transcription impossible
/words /	within /slashes/ indicate uncertain transcription
{*in curly brackets*}	transcriber's comments
[xxxxx]	material within square brackets *in the gloss* indicates exuberances of translation (what is not there in the original).
'	uninverted quotation mark in the middle of a transliterated word indicates the glottal stop phoneme.
'	inverted quotation mark in the middle of a transliterated word indicates an elided form (e. g., *ts'xa* instead of *tsrixa* ('needs', FEM, SG)).
SG	singular
PL	plural
M	masculine
F	feminine
3	3rd person
DIR OBJ	direct object marker
EXIST	existential
NEG EXIST	negative existential
COMPLT	complementizer
INTERGT	interrogative
POSS	possessive
COP	copula
PART	particle