Combining corpus and experimental methods to study dialogic engagement in spoken discourse

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Background
CTP constructions

- Epistemic and evidential complement-taking predicate (CTP) constructions:

  - *I suppose* COMPLEMENT

    » I **suppose [**that's one option**]**, but it's not a very practical one.

  - *I think* COMPLEMENT

    » Honestly I **think [**it was intentional**]**.

  - *I am convinced* COMPLEMENT

  - *I know* COMPLEMENT

  - etc.

Background
CTP constructions: traditional *vs.* dialogic view

The 'traditional' view	The dialogic view
How certain is the speaker about what she says?	How willing is the speaker to accept other people's opinions?

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Background

APPRAISAL theory

- APPRAISAL theory (Martin & White, 2005)

- Three components of APPRAISAL:

  - ATTITUDE

    » The movie was **amazing**!

  - GRADUATION

    » Officers arrested him and described him as **extremely** drunk.

  - ENGAGEMENT

    » I **believe** that no deal is better than this bad deal.

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APPRAISAL theory

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- Three components of APPRAISAL:

  - ATTITUDE

    » The movie was **amazing**!

  - GRADUATION

    » Officers arrested him and described him as **extremely** drunk.

  - **ENGAGEMENT**

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APPRAISAL theory's treatment of CTPs

- APPRAISAL theory tends to adopt a rigid classification. For example:

  - *I believe* belongs to the category of EXPANSION because it is generally used to signal that the speaker's opinion is one out of many possible viewpoints (Martin and White, 2005: 98)

  - *I know* is used to express CONTRACTION, signalling that further comments are disinvited (Martin and White, 2005: 155)

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Challenges in analyzing ENGAGEMENT

- ENGAGEMENT expressions are flexible and defy a rigid a-priori classification

  – *believe* can function as marker of EXPANSION and CONTRACTION in different contexts (Fuoli, *forthcoming*)

  – evaluation is highly context-dependent (e.g. Hunston, 2011; Paradis et al., 2012; Thompson & Alba-Juez, 2014)

  – CTPs serve multiple pragmatic functions (e.g. Aijmer, 2014; Boye & Harder, 2007; Brinton, 2008; Kaltenböck, 2013; Simon-Vandenbergen 2000; Thompson & Mulac, 1991; Van Bogaert, 2009)

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Research questions

1. What are the dialogic functions of first-person epistemic and evidential CTP constructions in spoken discourse?

2. What linguistic and extra-linguistic factors determine the dialogic function of the constructions?

Overview of the study

1. Exploratory corpus-based analysis based on the London-Lund Corpus of spoken British English (LLC)

   – GOAL: identify potentially relevant contextual factors affecting the dialogic force of CTPs

2. Experiment

   – GOAL: test the effect of three factors on speakers' interpretation of utterances containing CTPs as expansive or contractive

The corpus study

Data

- The London-Lund Corpus of spoken British English

    – Spontaneous face-to-face conversations

    – Six texts of 5,000 words each:

        » Conversations between equals (S.1.2, S.1.6, S.2.13)

        » Conversations between disparates (S.3.1, S.3.2, S.3.3)

- We searched for first-person epistemic-evidential CTPs

    – 246 CTP utterance were identified

    – 19 different predicates, including ASSUME, BE AFRAID, BE CERTAIN, BE CONVINCED, BE SURE, DOUBT…

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Corpus analysis

Phase 1
The utterances were annotated in accordance with five factors

Phase 2
The utterances were annotated as either dialogically expansive or contractive

Comparison
The two annotations were compared to find correlations between the dialogic function of CTP constructions and the five factors

1. Interlocutor status
2. Prosody
3. Presence of additional expansive marker
4. Presence of additional contractive marker
5. Type of complement clause

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Corpus analysis

Phase 1

The utterances were annotated in accordance with five factors

Phase 2

The utterances were annotated as either dialogically expansive or contractive

Comparison

The two annotations were compared to find correlations between the dialogic function of CTP constructions and the five factors

- Fuoli's (*forthcoming*) step-wise method for annotating APPRAISAL
- Included inter-coder reliability test

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Corpus analysis

Phase 1

The utterances were annotated in accordance with five factors

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The utterances were annotated as either dialogically expansive or contractive

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Key findings from corpus study

- First-person epistemic and evidential CTP constructions express both dialogic EXPANSION and CONTRACTION

- There are two linguistic factors and one extra-linguistic factor that most strongly correlate with dialogic function:

  - Interlocutor status

  - Presence of a co-occurring contractive marker

  - Prosodic marking of the first-person CTP

- The effect and significance of the factors will be tested in an experiment

The experiment

Hypotheses

FRIEND: I think that Jim is wrong
BOSS: I think that Jim is wrong

OPEN

CLOSE

I think that Jim is wrong
I think that Jim is **clearly** wrong

OPEN

CLOSE

I *think* that Jim is wrong
I think that Jim is wrong
I think that Jim is wrong

OPEN

CLOSE

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Experimental design

- 2 x 2 x 3 within-subjects factorial design

  1. Interlocutor status

     a. Equals (attributed to an equal-status interlocutor)

     b. Disparates (attributed to a higher-status interlocutor)

  2. Contraction

     a. Presence of a co-occurring contractive marker

     b. Absence of a co-occurring contractive marker

  3. Prosodic marking of *I think*

     a. Accent on pronoun

   b. Accent on verb

     c. No accent

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Procedure

- Participants took part in 36 imaginary conversations with another person

  – the person expressed her opinion on something

    » the opinion is always framed by *I think*

    » the conversations and opinion statements were manipulated to represent all the factors and their combinations

  – the participants both read and listened to the conversations

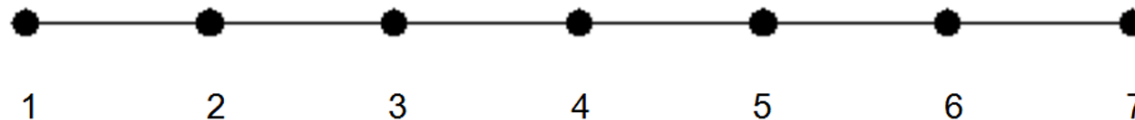 – the participants were asked to answer two questions using Likert-type scales

Questions

1. To what extent would the person take a different opinion from you into consideration?
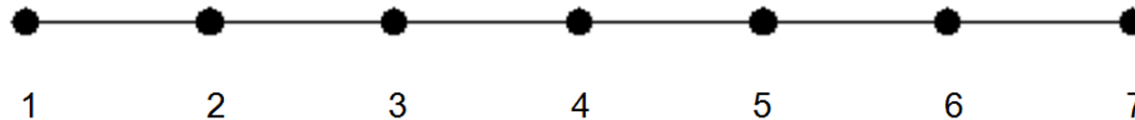
Perceived openness to dialogue

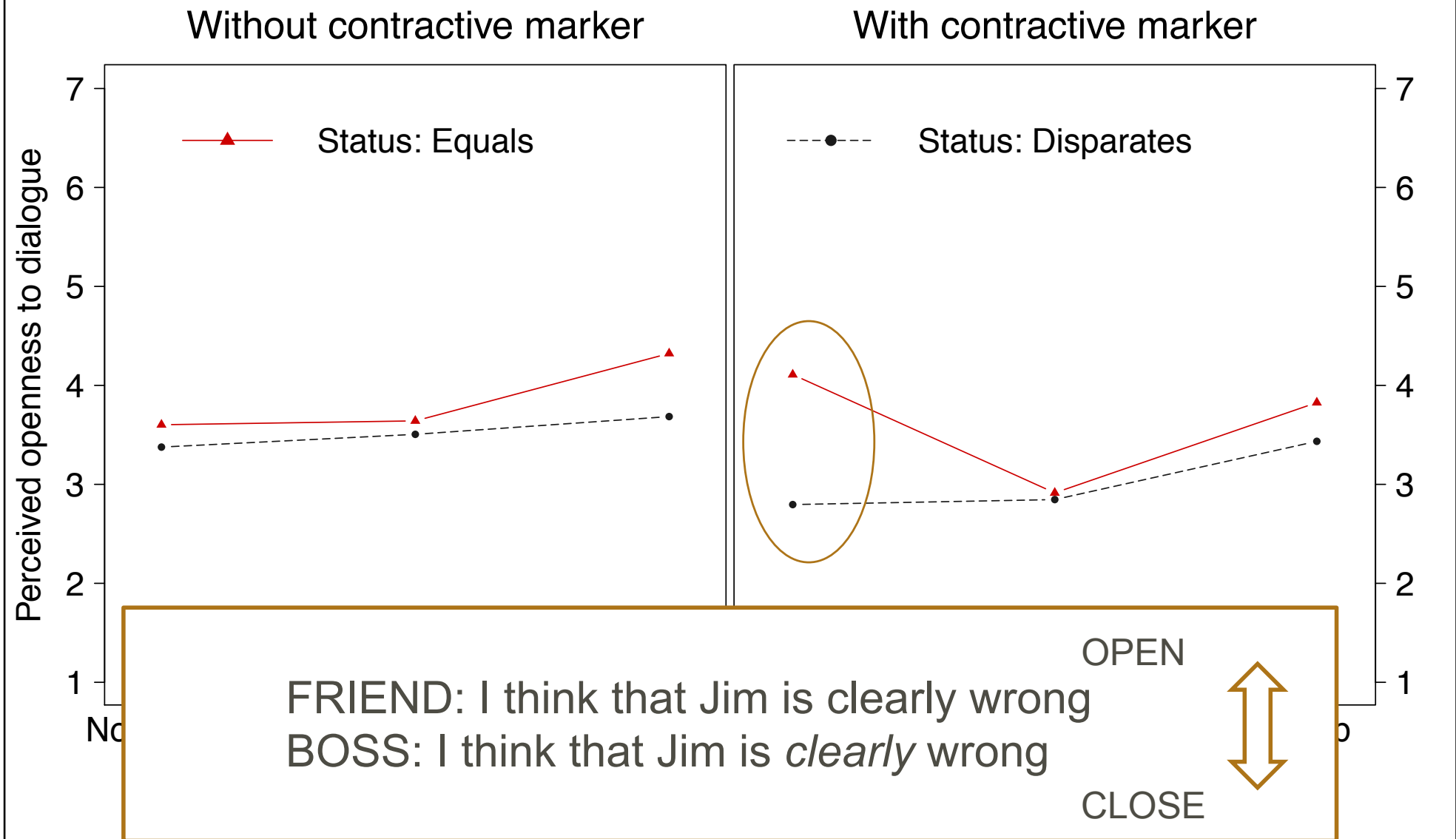2. How comfortable are you in expressing a different opinion?

Willingness to disagree

Participants

- 31 participants (23 female, 8 male)

- Native speakers of English

- 19-42 years of age

- Either staff or students at Lund University

- Movie ticket

Results

- The results were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA, followed by Bonferroni corrected post-hoc tests

- Hypothesis tests

  – Hypothesis 1: supported

  – Hypothesis 2 and 3: partially supported

    » three way interaction between the factors

Without contractive marker | With contractive marker

Perceived openness to dialogue

Status: Equals
Status: Disparates

FRIEND: I think that Jim is clearly wrong
BOSS: I think that Jim is *clearly* wrong

OPEN

CLOSE

Conclusions

- First-person epistemic and evidential CTP constructions express both dialogic EXPANSION and CONTRACTION, depending on:

   i.   the meaning of the CTP itself

   ii. the relationship between the interlocutors

   iii. the presence or absence of other stance markers

   iv. the prosodic marking of the first-person CTP

The study

- Is going to be published in a special issue on 'corpus approaches to evaluation' of the journal Corpora, co-edited by Susan Hunston and Stanislaw Roszkowski

- The manuscript can be downloaded from Nele Põldvere's Lund University or Academia page

# Phase 1: Annotation of five factors

Factors	Values
Interlocutor status	- Equals
	- Disparates
Prosody	- Accent on pronoun
	- Accent on verb/adjective
	- No accent
Expansive marker	- Expansive marker(s)
	- No expansive marker(s)
Contractive marker	- Contractive marker(s)
	- No contractive marker(s)
Complement clause	- Opinion
	- Fact

Dialogic contraction (blue) and dialogic expansion (green)
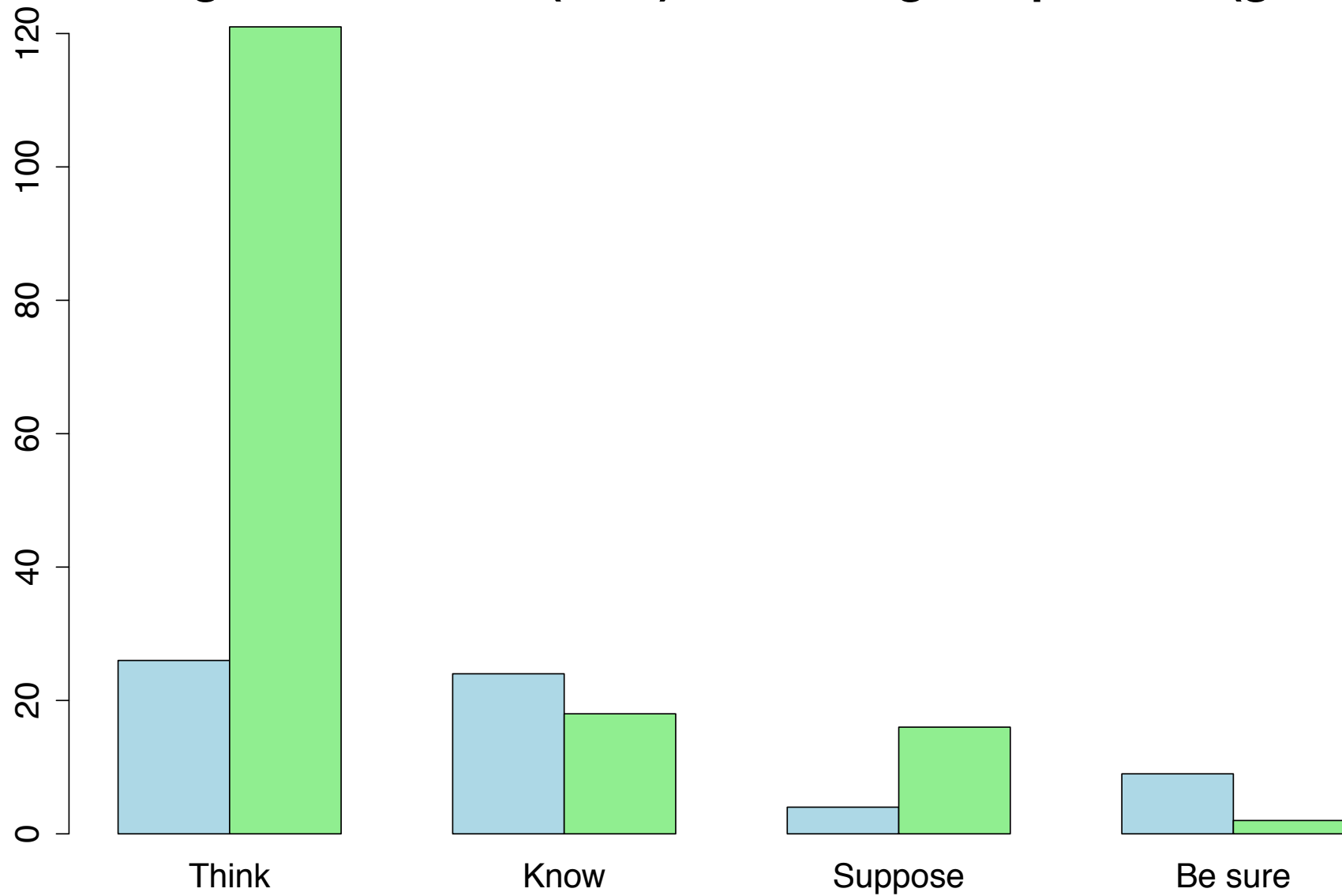
I think with a contractive function

(B is complaining about the department)

B: *but once again I'm not surprised . **because
       I think it had been b/uilt \up into a very
       powerful instrument ind\/eed**. [ə:m] with with
       you know four . four vice-presbyters five vice-
       presbyters with Coventry [ə:m ə:m] all chipping
       in . together*

Stimuli

Context

You are working in human resources in London. You and your boss Mrs. Chambers are discussing why there are not so many people taking part in the company's social gatherings.

Conversation

MRS. CHAMBERS SAYS TO YOU:
People's don't seem to be interested in spending their Friday nights with the people they spend the whole week together with. There's so much more to do in the city.
*** I think it's obviously because we live in London **.*

You are working in human resources in London. You and your boss Mrs. Chambers are discussing why there are not so many people taking part in the company's social gatherings.
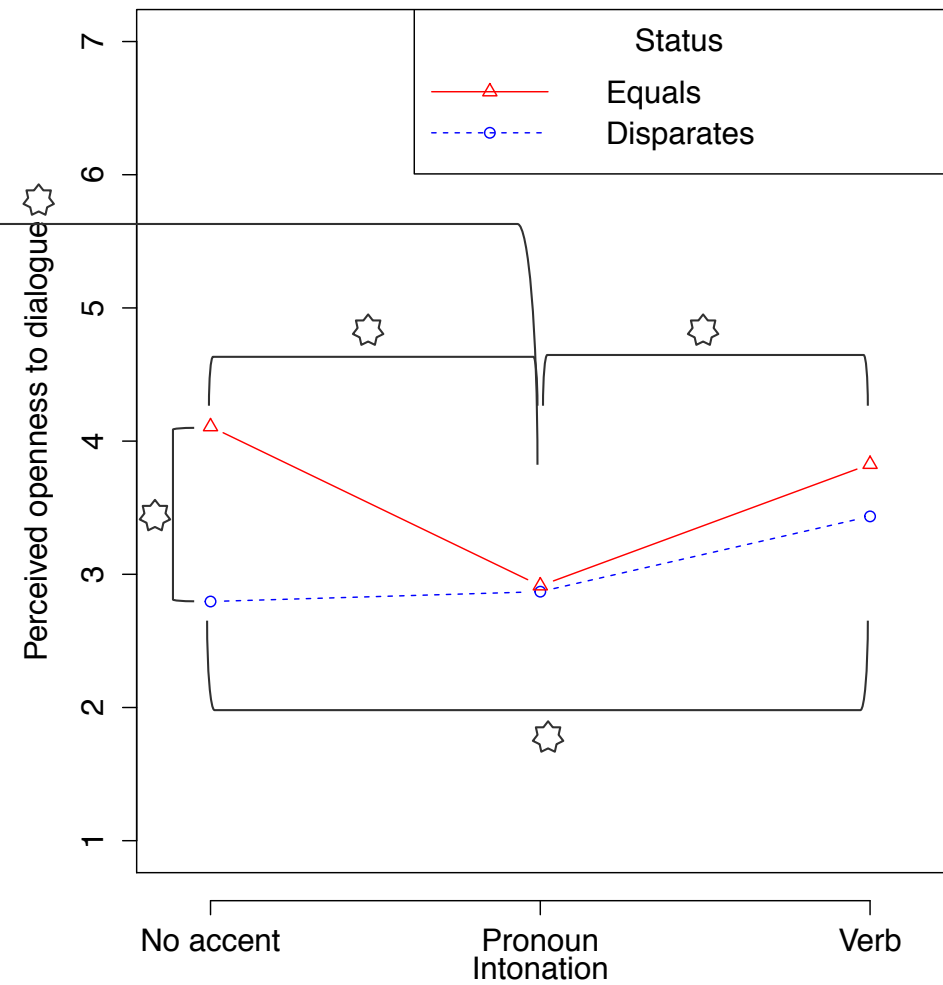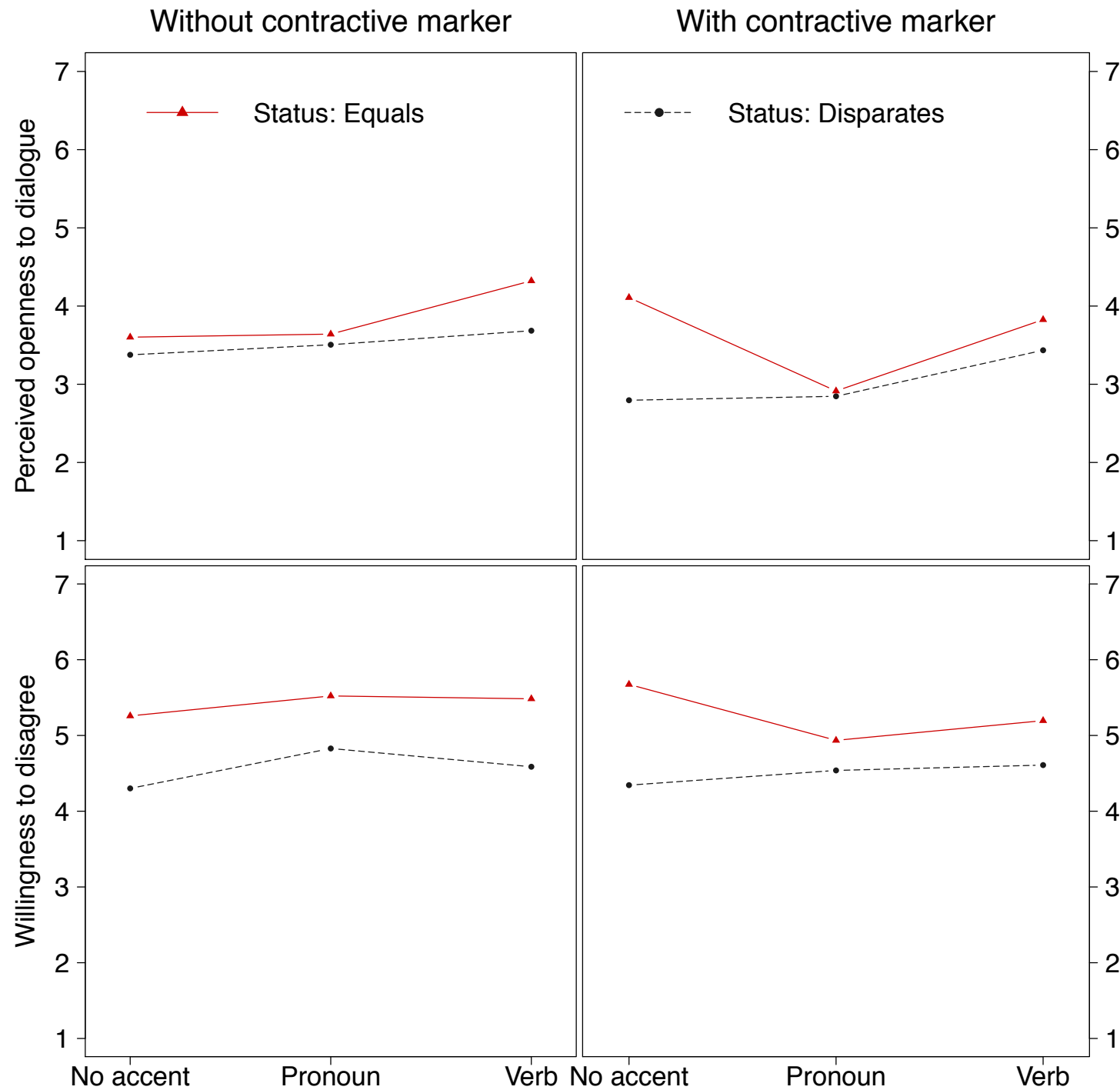
PRESS 'SPACE' TO MOVE ON TO THE CONVERSATION
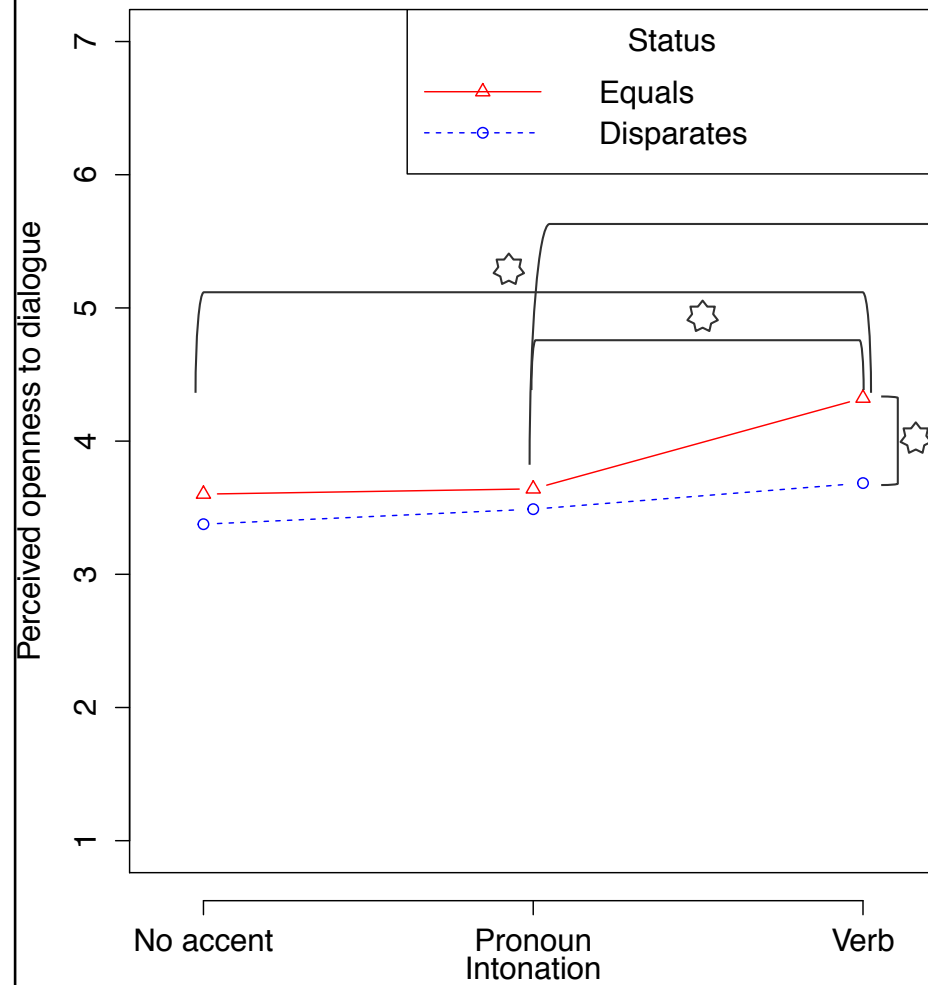
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Unaccented *I think* and contractive marker

- Most expansive utterance type in conversations between equals

- Significantly more contractive in conversations between disparates

- The construction has two functions:

  - Reinforcement of authority and expertise of the speaker (Aijmer, 2014; Simon-Vandenbergen, 2000)

  - Used to seek approval from the interlocutor and negotiate the validity of what is said (Brezina, 2009)

- The functions are activated depending on power differences between interlocutors

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Prosodic marking of *I think*

- Speakers alter the prosodic realisations of *I think* to control and influence the course of the conversation

- Accent on verb expresses a high degree of epistemic uncertainty *and* dialogic EXPANSION

- Accent on pronoun is interpreted as relatively more contractive:

  – The pragmatic function of *I think* changes from a downtoner to a booster (Kaltenböck, 2008)

  – Comparable to formulations of authorial emphasis, or CONTRACTION, in APPRAISAL

- Points to the need to extend APPRAISAL to spoken discourse

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