

Stand-Alone Responses: With Special Reference to the Word *Still* in American English Dialogue*

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1. Introduction

In conversation and dialogue in other registers, sentence elements can often stand alone as complete utterances, or so-called “responses” (Biber et al. 1999: 551; Quirk et al. 1985: 628 Note; cf. Akimoto 2017: 80–83), as in:

- (1) Rick: No, *definitely not*. I mean, no, I’m –
look how well I’m doing right now.
Brooke: *Still. Really*. I would feel better.

(*Bold and Beautiful* 2008 SOAP)

Italicized words are used holophrastically; that is, they express the meaning of a whole utterance on their own (cf. Brinton 2010: 287). This paper focuses on “stand-alone” words like these which show a speaker’s response or reaction to another interlocutor. The present study is conducted on the theme of how and why expressions come to be used in such a way, apart from everything else with which they originally appeared, and to show what new functions they take on once they are used independently.

The present paper focuses on one word, *still*, and examines its stand-alone response use and the evolution of the same in recent American English. In addition, it looks into the question of whether stand-alone responses have common, typical features despite originally belonging to a variety of different categories. This discussion is based on the findings of a new analysis and a review of previous literature. The investigation aims to contribute to the study of responses and the fields of discourse studies, pragmatics, and historical pragmatics.¹

Section 2 introduces previous studies that have particular relevance to this study. In Section 3, the data used in the study are explained. This is followed by Section 4, in which a synchronic analysis investigates the discourse marker (DM) *still* and the stand-alone response *still* in present-day English (PDE). Section 5 explores the historical emergence of *still* as a stand-alone

response from a DM. Section 6 discusses common functions observed in the uses of several stand-alone responses, and Section 7 provides a conclusion.

2. Previous studies

2.1 Stand-alone responses

As Biber et al. (1999: 551) and Quirk et al. (1985: 628 Note) exemplify, adverbs can be used alone, as in (2):

- (2) a. A: Getting there.
 B: Yeah.
 A: *Slowly* but *surely*.
- b. A: What you could afford you had.
 B: *Exactly. Exactly*.
- c. A: It's warm isn't it. By the radiator.
 B: *Probably*.
- d. A: I'm going to resign.
 B: *Really?*
- e. A: They have returned to San Francisco.
 B: *Very wisely*.

(a–c from Biber et al. (1999: 551); d–e from Quirk et al. (1985: 628 Note))

In (2a), the use of *slowly* and *surely* involves ellipses of the previous sentences (i.e., 'I am getting there slowly but surely.') (Biber et al. 1999: 551). In (2b), the repetitive use of *exactly* expresses (or emphasizes) agreement or concurrence, while in (2c), *probably* serves an answer, and *really* in (2d) is a question. In (2e), *very wisely* is used as a comment on a prior utterance. Tao (2007) examines the stand-alone *absolutely* in PDE conversation, as in (3):

- (3) S1: oh when, when they um, people who are organizing foreign policy they have to, kinda work on two levels, one with the other country and one like within, with the force within their, their own country.
 S2: *absolutely*. that's exactly the point (MC)

(Tao 2007: 2)

Absolutely appears as a stand-alone comment, followed by an affirmative token, serving as a turn initiator and a move to agreement (Tao 2007). (4) is another example from Akimoto (2017), where a phrasal adverbial (instead of an *-ly* adverb) serves a response:

- (4) “Then I suggest that we turn our dinner into a supper and follow up this clue while it is hot.”

“*By all means.*”

(The Blue Carbuncle: 251)

(Akimoto 2017: 82)

by all means functions as a response meaning ‘yes, definitely, sure.’ Akimoto also demonstrates other stand-alone response uses of phrasal adverbials, such as *quite so* and *on the contrary* (Akimoto 2017: 81–82).

Other parts of speech, in addition to adverbs, can also assume stand-alone responses. For example, in a study of *so* in ordinary English conversation, Raymond (2004: 211) observes that a speaker can take advantage of *so* (a conjunction) by using it in a stand-alone way to prompt a recipient’s action that “may be relevant — even “wanted” by the “so” speaker —” but not “officially” due from a recipient. (5) shows one example, where M and J are talking on the telephone:

(5) 27 M: ‘hhh I didn’ do much toda:y, except go to wo:rk.

28 J: Mm h:::m.

29 (1.8)

30 M: { ‘hhh hhh/(4.8) }

31 J: *So.*

32 (0.5)

33 M: *So.*

34 (0.3)

35 J: About tomororrow.

36 M: ‘hh rRight.

37 J: What’time d’youwan’go.

(Raymond 2004: 208; Partial omission and italics added by the author)

In line 31, J utters the stand-alone *so* and thus may be prompting M “to initiate a topic that both parties know and have rights to introduce” (Raymond 2004: 209). Instead of executing it, however, M (line 33) replies with *so*, returning the responsibility to J. Speakers can use the single *so* to prompt action, rather than doing it by a more obvious expression of pursuit (Raymond 2004: 211).

Fraser (2009), writing on DMs, explains that, in some cases, DMs appear on their own:

(6) a. A: I’ll have another piece of cake.

B: *But?* [Who gave you permission?]

b. A: We’ll arrive late, I’m afraid.

B: *So?* [What do you want me to do about it?]

- c. A: John will not take his medicine.
B: *And?* [What do you want me to do about it?]
- d. Context: John, seeing someone taking his bike.
John: *But!*
- e. Context: John, upon suddenly encountering his girlfriend embracing his best friend.
John: *So!*

(Fraser 2009: 300)

Fraser defines DMs as expressions that are acceptable in the sequence S1–DM+S2 (S1 and S2 are discourse segments). In (6a–c), S2s, which are implied in the brackets, are absent. In (6d, e), even S1s are not produced, yet they are understandable in these contexts.

Although there are not many, historical studies on the development of stand-alone uses have been conducted. For example, Brinton (2014) explores how the exclamatory *as if* in colloquial PDE (as in (7)) — which denies an asserted or implied state of affairs — has emerged diachronically.

- (7) “*As if!*” says Gambrell, 46. “He had no idea what I was about.” (COCA: NEWS 2006)

(Brinton 2014: 95)

Brinton’s study postulates that the exclamatory *as if* is the extreme insubordination of the form after having gone through several changes: adjunct clause (comparison/manner) > complement clause (following *be*, *look*, *seem*) > monoclausal > bare complementizer (Brinton 2014: 108). The latest bare complementizer lost not only the main clause, but also the content of the *as if* clause, so that only the subordinate conjunction remains. Another diachronic study that should be mentioned is Hansen’s (2005), which reveals the evolution of the French *enfin*. She traces its historical change from its original temporal meaning (‘in the end’) to procedural and subjective (DM) uses, including synthesizing and epistemic uses (sixteenth century) and a prompting use (seventeenth century). More recently, *enfin* has developed what she calls an “interjectional” use (e.g., *Enfin!* ‘Finally!’).

Previous studies have shown that forms belonging to diverse categories play the role of stand-alone responses. Among a wide range of items, the present study focuses on *still*. Subsection 2.2 reviews the history of the word.

2.2 A history of *still*

A number of studies (e.g., König and Traugott 1982; Moriya 2007; *OED-3*; cf. Michaelis 1993) have revealed how *still* has developed syntactically and semantically. The evolution is

illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The evolution of *still*

adjective (‘motionless’) > adverb (‘motionless, quietly’) > adverb (temporal durative)
> DM (concessive)

Originally, *still* was an Old English adjective (as in *still water*), which came to be used with verbs that took a complement (as in *stand still*, *sit still*), which caused confusion between the adjective and adverb. Then, it emerged as a temporal adverb in Middle English and extended further, to a concessive DM, in Modern English.

What the present study explores — the emergence of a stand-alone response use — is an even further diversification. This point is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.

3. Data

A corpus-based approach (cf. Ishikawa 2014: 30) was used in this investigation, and both qualitative and quantitative analyses are included.

Two corpora were used as the main sources. The first is the *Corpus of American Soap Operas* (SOAP; Davies 2011), a specialized corpus containing 100 million words from 22,000 transcripts from American soap operas from 2001 to 2012. Such dramas include data that mirror everyday spoken language (i.e., “written records of spoken language” (Rissanen 1986, quoted in Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 7)). The other is the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA; Davies 2010), a vast and structured corpus of historical English that contains more than 400 million words from 1820 to 2019.² This corpus provides a two-century-long time window on how forms developed their functions. Although COHA is genre-balanced (fiction, magazines, newspapers, and nonfiction books), the present study restricted itself to fiction (more specifically, dialogue taken from works of fiction), so as to make the diachronic data consistent with the synchronic data. Additionally, the American television drama *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005–present) was used, as including this has the advantage of facilitating the collection of more recent data via easy access to audio/video, thus providing information about the context of use for the targeted form.

4. Synchronic analysis

As Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (2000: 382) point out, in conversations, a concession is basically made before the speaker “goes on to claim the validity of a potentially contrasting statement or point.” Interestingly, Lewis’s (2020) recent study reveals that, in PDE, the concessive *still* has newly been used to express a speaker’s “weakly positive evaluation,” “in

which an undesirable, negatively-evaluated event is conceded and a less adverse, mitigating event is then put forward” (Lewis’s 2020: 138). The present study also observed these concessions in the use of *still*. In what follows, Section 4.1 looks at the DM *still*, and Section 4.2 examines the stand-alone response *still*. Not only concessions, but also new expressive and conversation management functions, will be seen.

4.1 Discourse marker *still*

The concessive DM *still* typically occurs in the utterance-initial position, or left periphery (LP) (cf. Beeching and Detges 2014), and it is usually followed by old information that has been already mentioned. It indicates the continuity of the information (Higashimori 2004: 4–5; cf. Bell 2010). In (8), P and p’ on the right side indicate this information relationship. In light of the action structure of discourse (Schiffrin 1987: 25), the DM *still* projects (foreshadows) a speaker’s upcoming action as a reassertion of what he/she has already claimed in conflict with the other interlocutor’s contention (denoted by Q).

- (8) 1 Jonathan: They should include you in more of their decisions. P
 2 Simone: Yeah, well, it’s really all right. I get paid the same. Q
 3 Jonathan: *Still*, you should get the credit you deserve. *Still*, p’
 (All My Children 2005 SOAP)

Here, *still* is projecting that Jonathan is going to make a reassertion about the credit Simone should receive. What it brings about, the content p’, is contrastive to Simone’s compromise (Q) (cf. Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson 2000: 382).

4.2 Stand-alone response *still*

Four major functions of the stand-alone response *still* can be observed: (A) reassertion, (B) preemption, (C) emotional expression, and (D) focus shift. They are examined in turn below.

(A) Reassertion

Whereas the DM *still* projects the reassertion performed with p’, this response *still* performs the action by itself. In the case of (9), *still* serves a whole turn. Here, two interlocutors, Tammy and Sandy, are talking about an acquaintance.

- (9) 1 Tammy: He wanted to come. He wants to be friends. P
 2 Sandy: He wants to torture us and remind us that Q
 3 he’s much, much cooler than we are.

- 4 Tammy: No, I saw something else. He's lonesome, Sandy. P
 5 Sandy: He brought that on himself. Q
 6 Tammy: *Still*. *Still* (p').
 7 Sandy: Don't give in to him, Tammy.

(*Guiding Light* 2005 SOAP)

Tammy is consistently making a stand for their acquaintance, known here only as *he* (lines 1 and 4). Sandy counters this, claiming that his problem is his own fault (lines 2–3 and 5). In line 6, Tammy reasserts P with *still* in which what could follow *still* (p') is absent but self-contained. In the next utterance, Sandy argues with Tammy again; that she is doing this without any trouble indicates that she understood what Tammy meant by *still*. *Still* mitigates Sandy's negative evaluation of *he* (line 5), expressing that *he* is less troubling than he might be otherwise, i.e., a “positive evaluation” (Lewis 2020).

(B) Preemption

The preemptor *still* is used when a speaker needs to say something before p' but also wants to express a conflicting position in advance. In some cases, as in (10), this relates to issues of politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). In (10), Chelsea and Bo are talking after a car accident Chelsea had when driving Bo's car:

- (10) 1 Chelsea: I still can't believe this. I mean, you must think that P
 2 I'm the biggest loser in the world.
 3 Bo: Oh, come on, stop it. It was a little accident. It happens Q
 4 to everyone.
 5 Chelsea: *Still*. I mean, you totally went out on a limb for me. *Still. I mean,*
 6 You signed my temporary license, you even let me *f* *and p'.*
 7 borrow your car, and then I go out and I hit something.
 8 I don't even know what it was or how it happened.
 9 Bo: There's a lot of ice out there tonight.

(*Days of Our Lives* 2006 SOAP)

Chelsea self-deprecates about the car accident (lines 1–2), so Bo comforts her (lines 3–4). This recovers Chelsea's positive face, which she had wounded herself, but at the same time creates a need for Chelsea to give Bo a positive face in return. Thus, in lines 5–7, following *Still. I mean*, Chelsea mentions what Bo kindly did for her (underlined part, denoted by *f* on the right side) and after that, proceeds to utter p' (*and then...it happened*), which can be taken as a reassertion of P (lines 1–2). What Chelsea is doing with *still* (line 5) is expressing her ongoing and conflicting stance against Bo for now, creating the subsequent turn space to supplement the

interactional priority (giving Bo a positive face) before going to p'.

(C) Emotional expression

The third function is emotional expression. In the data of the present study, negative emotions, such as regret, irritation, dissatisfaction, and so on, were observed. (11) displays a speaker's dissatisfaction expressed by *still*. A couple, Callie and Blake, are talking about Blake's move to New York from Seattle for her work:

- | | | | | |
|------|----|---------|---|-----------------------|
| (11) | 1 | Callie: | You ignore the moment completely. | P |
| | 2 | Blake: | What moment? | |
| | 3 | Callie: | The moment where I say, "Go to New York," | P |
| | 4 | | and then you ask me to come to New York | |
| | 5 | | with you... The moment. | |
| | | | ((omit)) | |
| | 6 | Blake: | Callie, you live here in Seattle. You, you have | Q |
| | 7 | | family. You have a job. You can't just drop | |
| | 8 | | everything and move to New York. | |
| | 9 | Callie: | I know! But <i>still</i> ! | <i>But Still (r)!</i> |
| | 10 | Blake: | Still what? | Repair initiation |
| | 11 | Callie: | It would have been nice to have been asked. | R |

(*Grey's Anatomy* 2016; partial omission by the author)

In lines 1 and 3–5, Callie implies in her utterances that she wanted Blake to have asked her to come to New York with her. Blake does not pick this up (lines 6–8), so Callie becomes frustrated. In line 9, her utterances *I know! But still!* express this dissatisfaction (and a little irritation). However, Blake does not understand what she is claiming with *still*, and so initiates a repair (*Still what?*) (cf. Schegloff et al. 1977). In line 11, Callie explains what she meant: the content Blake could not extract or infer from the extant context. What *still* included was, in this case, new information (indicated by r, R), not old information p', as seen in the examples above.

(D) Focus shift

The fourth is a focus shift, as seen in (12):

- | | | | | |
|------|---|--------|--|----------------------------|
| (12) | | | ((exchanges between other interlocutors)) | |
| | 1 | Zak: | Why are you so against Gwen's band for the | |
| | 2 | | prom? You didn't even hear them. | |
| | 3 | Casey: | Okay, fine, I'll listen to 'em. But <i>still</i> . | ... <i>But Still (r)</i> . |

- 4 Zak: Still what? Repair initiation
 5 Casey: I still think we should listen to the mix from R
 6 the radio station.
 7 Zak: Why?

(As the World Turns 2005 SOAP)

Casey responds defiantly to Zak’s question (lines 1–2), without actually answering it (line 3). The turn-final *but still* receives Zak’s repair initiation (*Still what?*). By executing the repair (lines 5–6), Casey shifts the focus of the conversation from “Gwen’s band” to “the mix.” Here, *but still* is taken advantage of as a first move to the shift; it can be taken that Casey said *but still* in a purposefully inarticulate way, with the expectation that Zak would seek clarification, on the basis of which she could then introduce the new topic (information).

4.3 Summary

The DM *still* and the stand-alone response *still* were examined in this section. Figure 2 presents schemas of sequences where the various forms of *still* examined thus far have appeared. The sequence organization of the DM use and the response uses of (A) and (B), roughly speaking, are similar. Those of (C) and (D) are distinguished from them in that *still* is followed by a repair exchange, in which new information that is outside the scope of the recipient’s assumptions was brought about.

Figure 2: Sequences where *still* appeared

• DM	• Stand-alone response	
Project reassertion	(A) (Perform) Reassertion	(B) Preemption
J: P	T: P	C: P
S: Q	S: Q	B: Q
J: <i>Still</i> , p’.	T: <i>Still</i> (p’).	C: <i>Still</i> . I mean, f, and p’.
	(C) Emotional expression	(D) Focus shift
	C: P	C: ... <i>But still</i> (r).
	B: Q	Z: Repair initiation
	C: <i>But still</i> (r)!	C: R
	B: Repair initiation	
	C: R	

5. The evolution of the stand-alone response *still*

Table 1 presents the four most common occurrence patterns of the DM *still* and the stand-alone response *still* in SOAP. Table 2, which is derived from COHA, shows how these patterns

Table 1: Occurrences of the patterns of the DM *still* and the stand-alone response *still* in SOAP

	DM	Occurrence	Response	Occurrence
1	<i>Still,</i>	858	<i>Still.</i>	50
2	<i>But still,</i>	199	<i>But still.</i>	10
3	<i>Well, still,</i>	109	<i>Yeah, but still.</i>	6
4	<i>Yeah, but still,</i>	64	<i>Well, still.</i>	4
Total		1230		70

Table 2: Occurrences of the patterns of the DM *still* and the stand-alone response *still* in COHA (Iwai 2017: 72)

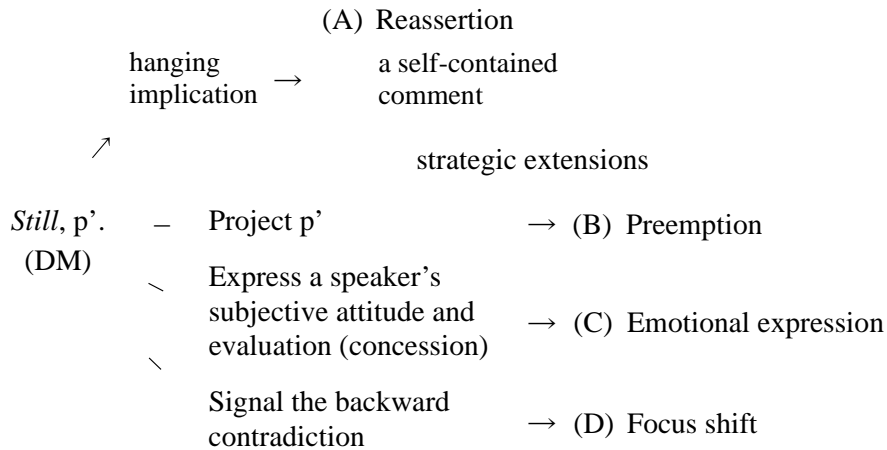
Time Pattern	1810s	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
<i>"Still,</i>		5	8	12	17	25	26	37	30	32	48	55	36	36 (1)*	48	45 1	34 2	60 1	35 2	55 3	644 9(1)
<i>"But still,</i>					5		2	1	1	1		1	3	2		6	3	6		2	33
<i>"Well, still,</i>																1		1	1	1	2 2
<i>Yeah, but still,</i>																				1	1
<i>"Still.</i>													1		1	1	2	1 1	4	2	4 9
<i>"But still.</i>																	1		1	1	3
<i>"Yeah, but still.</i>																					0
<i>"Well, still.</i>																					0
DM		5	8	12	22	25	28	38	31	33	48	56	40	38	49	53	37	68	35	58	684
Total Response														(1)	1	5	2	8	7		708

bold numbers = occurrence of the response *still*; numbers without bold face = occurrence of the DM *still*
 (1)* = example of the response *still* that is also analyzable as a DM

have occurred during the last 200 years. The earliest example of the response use was noted in the 1940s, and it has been constantly observed since the 1960s. The statistical analyses based on Tables 1 and 2 revealed that *still*'s stand-alone response use has developed in the last 20 years or so out of the DM use ($X^2(1)=6.928, p<.01$).³ It is also worth noting that *but still* ranked first in the number of appearances, behind the single use. As Lewis (2020: 130) points out, it would appear that “an incipient lexicalization ([but] [still] > [but still])” may be happening.

The development of *still* from a DM into a stand-alone response involves “strategic extensions” (cf. Hansen 2005: 39). Figure 3 displays how this may have taken place. The use of the response *still* as a reassertion occurred via the ellipsis (or more accurately, the non-expression) of p’ that appeared in the DM use; at first it was a “hanging implication” (Mulder and Thompson 2008) that was conventionalized to a self-contained speaker comment (cf. Lewis 2020: 139). The preemptor *still* is based on DM *still*'s projecting function; since the DM

Figure 3: Assumed extensions in the development of the response *still*



foreshadows something, it is reusable as a turn holder to create a space to insert interactional priority before p'. The emotional expression would be a result of the “increased subjectification” (cf. Traugott 2003; Traugott and Dasher 2005: Chapter 4) that happened to the concessive *still*, which expresses a speaker’s subjective attitude and evaluation (cf. Moriya 2007: 4; Traugott 1988). Finally, it is believed that the function of signaling the backward contradiction of the DM *still* was useful for shifting focus, allowing a speaker to bring about (a little abruptly) a focus shift by indicating some kind of connection with the prior discourse.

Figure 1' represents Figure 1, where the findings of the present study (the development of the stand-alone response) have been added; A–D indicate the four functions analyzed above:

Figure 1': The evolution of *still*

adjective ('motionless') > adverb ('motionless, quietly') > adverb (temporal durative)
> DM (concessive) > response (A–D)

(13) provides examples of each *still* in Figure 1':

- (13) a. Se widfloga wundum *stille* hreas on hrusan. ['motionless,' Adj] (OE *Beowulf* 2830; *OED-3*, s.v. *still* adj. 1 a)
- b. Heo..*stille* bute stefne þus to criste cleopede. ['quietly,' Adv] (c1225 *Juliana* (Royal MS.) 36; *OED-3*, s.v. *still* adv. 1 a)
- c. Thy gates shal stonde open *still* both day and night. [temporal, Adv] (1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) Isa. lx. B; *OED-3*, s.v. *still* adv. 3 a)
- d. *Still*, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. [concessive, DM] (1825 T. B. MACAULAY *Milton* in *Edinb. Rev.* Aug. 320; *OED-3*, s.v. *still* adv. 6 b)
- e. *Still*. [Response] (2005 *All My Children*; SOAP)

The meaning of *still* has thus developed from an objective meaning describing facts ('motionless') to a meaning expressing a speaker's subjective attitude and evaluation (concessive). When it becomes a response, *still* comes to deal with a politeness problem and, in some cases, its use involves a repair exchange with another interlocutor to manage the conversation. It would appear that *still* has been taking on a more social, interpersonal role in the course of the latest diversification.

6. Discussion

Finally, this section discusses whether or not responses have common, typical features, by focusing on the findings of the present study.

(12)', below, is a representation of (12), an example of the focus shift *still*. Interestingly, the author's quick survey of Japanese data found an example, (14), where the Japanese *demo* 'but' is being used quite similarly to the focus shift *still* in (12)'.⁴

- (12)' ((exchanges between other interlocutors))
- 1 Zak: Why are you so against Gwen's band for the
2 prom? You didn't even hear them.
3 Casey: Okay, fine, I'll listen to 'em. But *still*.
4 Zak: Still what?
5 Casey: I still think we should listen to the mix from
6 the radio station.
7 Zak: Why?

(As the World Turns 2005 SOAP)

- (14) 1 F006: Enkai datte kiita kara.
2 <Warai> Sanka shita dake no.
'Because (I) heard it was a party.
<laugh> (a party he/she) just joined.'
3 F018: Shoganai. Doi shita de.
'(I) can't help it. (I) agreed.'
4 F004: SE nitsuite hanashiteta no, sakki.
5 Chotto dake ne.
'(We) were talking about SE, earlier.
Just a little bit.'
6 F006: *Demo*.
'But.'
7 F004: Nani?
'What?'

- 8 F006: Un, kino no are wa kangeki shita ne, yappari.
 ‘Yeah, (I) was impressed with that yesterday, after all.’
 (Nagoya University Conversation Corpus, data013; see Fujimura et al. 2012)

The conversation in (14) is a welter of topics (lines 1–5). In line 6, F006 says *demo*, which receives F004’s repair initiation (*Nani?* ‘What?’). By repairing and clarifying it, F006 shifts the focus of the talk (lines 8). *Un, kino no are wa kangeki shita ne, yappari* is new information in the ongoing conversation. *Un* ‘Yeah’ in the turn-initial position indicates that the speaker expected to receive the repair initiation from the other interlocutors.

Next, the response *still* expresses the speaker’s emotions (regret, irritation, dissatisfaction, etc.), which is similar to Hansen’s (2005: 61) argument that the “interjectional” *enfin* appears as a “negative” one that expresses resignation, impatience, and/or dissatisfaction (*Enfin*, ... ‘Really, ...’) — and also as a “positive” one, expressing satisfaction and/or relief (*Enfin!* ‘Finally!’).

Finally, based on the findings of previous studies, there is a common feature between the French *enfin* and the English *so*. Raymond (2004) demonstrates that the stand-alone *so* prompts a recipient’s action (cf. (5)), while *enfin* also appears to be used as a prompt (Hansen 2005: 57), as in (15):

- (15) Il me parle d’amour, et moi je le refuse;
 Je le quitte en colère, il me suit tout confus,
 Me fait nouvelle excuse, et moi nouveau refus.
 ISABELLE. Mais *enfin*?
 (Pierre Corneille, *L’Illusion comique*, 1639, from *Frantext*)
 ‘He speaks to me of love, and I refuse him;
 I leave him in anger, he follows me all embarrassed,
 Apologizes again, and I refuse him again.
 ISABELLE. Well? (≅ But then what?)’

(Hansen 2005: 57)

Here, “the speaker is using *enfin* to encourage her interlocutor to pursue her narrative to its presumed ending” (Hansen 2005: 58).

At the very least, the above facts suggest that there may be common, typical functions for stand-alone responses. From a historical standpoint, they are likely to develop in the later stages of history (cf. Section 2). Future research into other phenomena of (and changes to) response use may serve to (dis)confirm the hypotheses presented here.

7. Conclusion

On the theme of how and why stand-alone response uses arise out of sentence-internal/

associated uses and what new functions they have once they are used as responses, this paper conducted a case study of the word *still*. It was shown that *still*'s response use developed out of the DM use in PDE, acquiring new functions of reassertion, preemption, emotional expression, and focus shift. It was also pointed out that this development involves strategic extensions.

Responses are typical features of colloquial speech. When we see language from the perspective of more general human activity (interaction), the turn structure is deeply involved in the organization of human linguistic behavior, and responses are an important element in making this happen (Ohoi p.c.). At least in the examples shown in this paper, *still* occurred in the turn-initial and turn-final positions and as a whole turn by itself. A fuller investigation of this issue remains to be seen.

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¹ At the 17th International Pragmatics Conference of IPrA, International Pragmatics Association, in July 2021, there were presentations on stand-alone uses of the Chinese adverbs *queshi* 'indeed' and *zhende* 'really' and the Taiwanese Mandarin *dangran* 'of course.'

² The data from SOAP and COHA used in the present study were accessed and collected between 2016 and 2017. The period COHA covered at that time (1810s–2000s) was slightly different from that of today.

³ Cf. Iwai (2017: Section 4).

⁴ The author translated line 2 in (14), *Sanka shita dake no* into English '(a party he/she) just joined,' in which the subject, 'he/she,' is undefined because it was difficult to specify in the data.

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