

## Challenging Western-centric Traditional Conversational Analysis: A case of Discourse Particle ‘Na’ as a Polymodal Pragmatic Operator

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**Abstract:** This paper challenges the Western Conversation Analysis paradigm by critically examining the discourse marker ‘Na’ in Urdu conversations. Based on a qualitative study of natural Urdu interactions, the research utilizes data collected from 28 conversations lasting over 200 minutes in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, between 2013 and 2015. The findings reveal that the Urdu discourse marker ‘Na’ questions Western-centric classifications such as Heritage's (2017) binary model and Schegloff's (2007) contiguity principle by asserting epistemic authority, guiding action trajectories, and reflecting culturally shared emotional attitudes. Following Sohail's (2010) Urdu transcription methodology, this culturally rooted approach identifies four context-dependent roles of ‘Na’ in Urdu conversations: (i) a normative accountability marker enforcing cultural obligations; (ii) an affective intensification marker promoting emotional expression; (iii) an authority legitimizer establishing unchallengeable bureaucratic actions; and (iv) a solidarity marker fostering shared sensory perspectives. The results prove that the multifunctionality of ‘Na’ is evidence of the syntactic flexibility of Urdu, which complies with South Asian social conventions. It therefore undermines the assumption of universality in markedness both syntactically and semantically. The work promotes decolonial methods of linguistic research within particular social and cultural contexts. By applying community- and culture-centred analysis, it contends that these approaches can fill epistemic lacunae in linguistic studies. This study focuses on the local rather than the universal and encourages ethnomethodology. Future pragmatic research could build on these results through intensive data collection.

**Keywords:** pragmatic, intensive, undermines, perspectives

## INTRODUCTION

Discourse particles such as “Na” in Urdu conversations play a crucial role in natural discourse; however, they remain insufficiently studied. While discourse markers in English, including “Oh” and “well,” have been extensively examined within fields such as conversation analysis and construction grammar (Heritage, 2015; Imo, 2016), Urdu discourse markers are frequently neglected in pragmatic research. This paper concentrates on the “Na” discourse marker due to its significance in natural Urdu conversations. Urdu serves as the lingua franca for approximately 230 million individuals in Pakistan and over 400 million worldwide; consequently, its distinctive syntactic and pragmatic structure (Bashir, 2010)

warrants appropriate scholarly attention. This study examines three questions centred on "Na", a typical yet multifunctional particle.

1. What are the interactional roles of "Na" in Urdu talk-in-interaction?
2. How do sequence placement and prosody influence these functions?
3. In what ways does "Na" compare or contrast with particles in other studied languages?

By analyzing natural Urdu data through Conversation Analysis (CA), we demonstrate that "Na" functions as a flexible emphatic marker essential for negotiating epistemic authority, guiding progressivity, and mitigating face threats. Our findings contribute to cross-linguistic particle research and provide insights for teaching Urdu as a second language.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The foundational perspective that conversation constitutes a collaborative achievement (Goodwin, 1986) remains influential to date. Stiver's (2013) categorization of discourse particles such as 'mm', 'hm', 'uh', 'yeah' and non-verbal cues such as 'head movements' as a single category of 'response tokens' has garnered strong support from the pragmatic discourse analysts. However, recent research critically evaluates the level of detail within this classification.

Contemporary multimodal Conversation Analysis (Mondada, 2018; Rossano, 2012) demonstrates that the meaning and role of tokens heavily depend on their precise timing in relation to gaze, gesture, and posture. An ordinary 'mm' can indicate active listening, agreement, or impending disagreement entirely through its embodiment and position within the sequence. This challenges traditional lexical categories by emphasizing the emergent, embodied nature of responses.

The local conversation management system, regulated by group-specific norms (Wardhaugh, 1986, 2006; Aijmer, 1987), is fundamental to Conversation Analysis's (CA) emphasis on participants' context-aware, next-turn planning (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz's (1982) concept of "cross-cultural communication failure" remains essential; however, recent studies have adopted a more refined and critical approach. Rather than perceiving differences solely as "failure," contemporary researchers focus on differential interactional practices and asymmetries in pragmatic expectations (Bolden, 2009, 2016; Kádár & Mills, 2011).

This perspective reinterprets "failure" as a potential site of pragmatic hegemony, where dominant interactional norms (often Anglo-centric) are mistakenly regarded as universal, thereby marginalising other culturally valid methods of fostering mutual understanding (Reyes, 2020a). Heritage's (2013, 2015) concept of progressivity, rooted in Schegloff's (1979, 2007) notion of smooth movement towards the "heavily-next" element, remains pivotal. Nevertheless, current critical research questions the notion that progressivity should invariably serve as the ideal in interaction. Keevallik & Hakulinen (2018) examine embodied interactions, such as dance, and demonstrate how pauses in progressivity are not necessarily "marked" or problematic; instead, they often function as collaborative tools for complex coordination. Bolden (2022) posits that, in specific contexts, such as therapy or conflict resolution, non-progressive tactics (hesitations, reformulations) are essential for managing sensitive actions and fostering more profound understanding, thereby challenging earlier assumptions within CA that prioritize progressivity.

Heritage (2017) offers a key comparison between ‘oh’ (which is speaker-state oriented and backwards-looking) and ‘well’ (which is sequence-trajectory oriented, forward-looking, and polysemous). Recent research offers more detailed analysis and critical insights.

While Heritage (2017) associates ‘oh’ with changes in the speaker's state, often epistemic, Vatanen (2014) highlights its vital role in affect management in Finnish and English, expressing surprise, disappointment, or empathy, and indicating subsequent actions by recipients. Dehé and Wichmann (2010) identify notable prosodic differences in ‘oh’, such as pitch and duration, that serve various interactional functions, including genuine surprise versus ritualized acknowledgment, thereby challenging the idea of a single ‘core meaning’.

Heritage's perspective on the multiple meanings of ‘well’ is supported; however, recent studies have more systematically charted its range of uses. Cuenca (2019), analyzing large corpora, finds distinct groups of ‘well’ functions such as frame-shifting, mitigation, delay, and topic control. They argue that the activation of these functions relies heavily on ‘syntactic position’ within the turn and ‘prosodic packaging’, rather than just their order. This suggests that the procedural meaning of ‘well’ is even more context-dependent than previously thought, underscoring the need for a combined multimodal analysis.

The association between ‘well’ and ‘marked progressivity’ (Heritage, 2013, 2015; Schegloff, 1996) is well-documented. Nonetheless, Clift (2021) provides a critical examination of ‘participant orientation’ concerning this marking. Her comprehensive analysis of recipient responses indicates that not all ‘well’-initiated turns are perceived by co-participants as signifying a substantial departure; at times, ‘well’ functions more subtly as a turn-holding or topic-organizing device without explicit disjunction. This view highlights the necessity of grounding assertions regarding ‘markedness’ in explicit evidence of participant behavior in successive turns. Furthermore, Betz et al. (2021) investigate the role of ‘well’ in ‘multi-party interaction’, demonstrating its utility beyond the management of adjacency pairs (e.g., question-answer sequences), including the coordination of participation and the addressing of potential overhearers.

The current study presents ‘Na’ in Urdu as a comparison point. Although its position outside the initial turn contrasts with English ‘oh/well’, recent cross-linguistic studies provide important frameworks for analyzing this difference.

Hakulinen et al.'s (2004) conceptualization of a ‘linear syntax’ involving particles forming a ‘prosodic whole’ finds parallels across diverse languages (Stiver, 2013; Stiver et al., 2013). Sorjonen's (2019) analysis of Finnish response particles demonstrates how particles such as ‘joo’ can constitute complete turns or complex turn-initial segments, with prosody serving a pivotal role in signaling their scope and function, thereby implying potential relevance to Urdu ‘Na’. However, the direct application of frameworks developed for European languages, such as the binary distinction of ‘marked progressivity’, to Urdu ‘Na’ may result in ‘analytical imperialism’. Contemporary research advocates for ‘emically grounded methods’ (Enfield & Sidnell, 2017), wherein the functional scope of a particle like ‘Na’ is initially understood through its systematic utilization in Urdu discourse, prior to the imposition of external categories (Phillipson, 1997, 2021).

The idea that ‘Na’ can be a standalone prosodic unit is consistent with research on particles worldwide, such as Mandarin ‘a’ and Korean ‘ney’. However, the assertion of ‘no syntactic dependence’ requires a more detailed analysis. Although the discourse particles (such as ‘Na’) might not participate in complex clause structures, their ‘sequential dependence’ plays a crucial role. Their function relies entirely on their specific position within the sequence and turn (Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2015).

Connecting ‘Na’ to Heritage's (2013, 2015) concepts of unmarked and marked progressivity provides a solid starting point. Nonetheless, the definitions of ‘unmarked’ and ‘marked’

progressivity may be culturally and linguistically context-dependent. What counts as a departure from expectations in [Urdu] conversation could differ markedly from Anglo-American norms (Wong & Waring, 2021). Does 'Na' at turn-final positions signal emphasis, as suggested, in a way that maintains progressivity, or does it subtly redirect it? When used for intensification, does it conform to "unmarked" movement, or does it create a new interactional dynamic? These are questions that require empirical examination based on Urdu interactional data, rather than assumptions derived from English particle functions.

The paper accurately highlights the gap in CA research concerning the use of 'Na' in Urdu. This gap is part of a larger issue of South Asian languages being underrepresented in mainstream CA literature (Canagarajah, 2022). Exploring 'Na' offers language-specific insights and the opportunity to question and refine universal theories about particle roles, progressivity, and turn-taking, thereby advancing a more comparative approach in interactional linguistics (Dingemanse, 2015). Such studies must carefully analyze Urdu conversational data using CA methods and be aware of potential biases arising from analytical frameworks developed in different contexts.

To sum up the research on discourse particles continues to develop, focusing on their multimodal production, contextual relevance, and part in handling complex social interaction elements such as progressivity, epistemics, and affect. While early studies on 'oh' and 'well' offer solid frameworks, newer research provides more detailed distinctions, questions existing assumptions (like the idea that progressivity preferences are universal), and emphasizes prosodic and syntactic contexts. Introducing a particle like Urdu 'Na' offers valuable insights. However, it is essential to go beyond a simple analogy with English particles by conducting a thorough emic analysis of 'Na' within its Urdu conversational context, considering culturally specific norms of progressivity and participation. Such studies can enhance understanding of Urdu interactions and contribute to a broader, more inclusive understanding of discourse particles worldwide, challenging biases and broadening both empirical and theoretical perspectives.

Research on Hindi-Urdu particles remains limited. The majority of existing studies focus on negation (for instance, "nahī"; Montaut, 2004; Homer & Bhatt, 2020) or tag questions (such as "naa'n; O'Reilly-Brown, 2020), often overlooking their pragmatic functions. Khalid's (2020) Conversation Analysis study of Urdu "to", a TOPIC marker, illustrates how particles aid in sustaining topical coherence. Additionally, Kidwai (2023) links Punjabi particles with evidentiality. Nevertheless, to date, there has been no investigation into "Na" as a multifunctional emphaser, notwithstanding its frequent usage in spoken Urdu.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection

The study utilizes audio recordings of naturally occurring Urdu conversations in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, a Pakistani-administered part of a politically disputed region where Urdu serves as an official lingua franca amidst a linguistic landscape that includes Kashmiri, Hindko, and Pashto. Although the 2013-2015 data were initially collected for broader Conversational Analysis research, repurposing them for the examination of 'Na' demands requires meticulous reflexivity. Urdu's dominance as a formal and official language influences speakers' choice even in informal settings. Muzaffarabad, being the capital of the state government and hub of governmental institutions, attracts people from different regions of the state and Pakistan, thereby making Urdu a necessary language to facilitate smooth understanding of various linguistic backgrounds, languages, and dialects. It must also be noted that 'Na' is also a part of several regional languages, including Pahari,

Hindko, Gojri, and Pothohari. The recordings include data from 200 minutes of several separate discussions having participants from all three divisions of the state.

## Participants

The participants belonged to different regions, and their audio recordings were made during natural conversations. The data from 28 participants (17 female and 11 male, from diverse backgrounds and educational qualifications) were relevant to this research, and only their recordings were used in this paper. However, not all of them are quoted here due to space constraints. The prior consent was sought without informing them of the exact language area being considered; however, they were informed that the data would be used purely for language research purposes, and they could discuss whatever they wanted without the observer's paradox. Moreover, none of the researchers was present during the recording. One of the participants would be asked to record data by informing them. They were also assured, through a written affidavit, that their identities would be kept confidential, and any information during their discussion that may refer to a particular identifiable person, community, or group would be altered during analysis.

It is pertinent to mention that researchers are well aware of the consequences of withholding the exact research aim (Speer's, 2008 'deception lite') and therefore anonymity protocols have been completely adhered to avoid any potential vulnerability associated with the political sensitivity of the region.

This small-scale research involved only 28 participants, and the relevant data was limited across conversations. Future detailed analyses could lead to different and improved applications of the discourse particle. Given that participants belonged to three different territorial divisions of the state and had diverse backgrounds, it can be considered a representative sample; however, we do not claim it fulfills the requirements of ethnolinguistic diversity or asserts generalizability.

### Analytical framework

A qualitative descriptive analysis was conducted following Sohail's (2010) Urdu transcription conventions. This was done to respond to critiques identified in the literature review. The following aspects have been examined.

**Emic Grounding:** Emphasizing Na's roles within Urdu's natural sequence, rather than using Anglophone CA categories like Heritage's oh/well framework. This approach opposes analytical imperialism (Wu, 2021).

**Reevaluating progressivity:** Investigating if Heritage's (2015) "marked/unmarked progressivity" binary is applicable to Urdu or if Na indicates culture-specific patterns, such as whether turn-final Na maintains or redirects the flow of action.

**Qualifying findings as exploratory;** small-scale data reveals potentials, not universals. Warnings against the decontextualized use of pedagogical applications must be tempered by cross-linguistic relevance (e.g., for L2 Urdu learners).

This methodology highlights Urdu's interactional complexity while examining the colonial legacies of CA. By situating Na within its sociopolitical context—not as a "deviation" from English norms—the study helps decolonise discourse particle research (Bhattacharya, 2021). Future research should incorporate video data to capture embodied aspects and involve community stakeholders in participatory analysis.

### 'Na' as a Normative Accountability Marker

Traditional linguistic analyses, often based on Eurocentric universalist models, struggle to classify the Urdu particle 'na', frequently labelling it simply as a tag question or 'softener'

due to its superficial resemblance to similar elements in European languages. A refined analysis that emphasizes South Asian interactional practices shows 'Na' as a highly context-dependent, multifunctional pragmatic tool. Social hierarchies are crucial in linguistic research. The speakers mutually negotiate epistemic stances within joint frames of reference to sustain and convey culturally situated politeness, thereby regulating social relationships. The marker 'Na' not only confirms statements but also mitigates face-threatening acts, moderating their force, and invokes solidarity respect. It also invokes boundaries that elicit listener engagement. In Urdu discourse, the employment of 'Na' is indicative of communication principles that are relational harmony-oriented and engagement-oriented. Personal assertions tend to be bargained into communal ones. Unlike Universalist positions, which imply that pragmatic functions of discourse markers are readily translatable across languages, speakers of Urdu demonstrate that 'Na' has singular cultural sociolinguistic logics for use in actual interaction. The universalist explanation is pushed back against by 'Na', highlighting the importance of culturally particular frameworks in making sense of these practices. The adjacency sequence below shows this epistemic foundation by displaying how justification is handled during the conversation.

1. Bhabi Nahim jatim? (Does Sister-in-law not go?)
2. → Bhabi tu Gai thi **Na**, uN kY tu bhai Ki shadi thi. (She did go NA, as it was her brother's marriage).

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Simultaneously, the speaker's accountability is also ensured by using the 'Na' marker as the speaker knows s/he has to adhere to social norms, as s/he knows what is expected from him/her, and s/he has to comply actively. It also implicitly assures the listener that the

speaker recognizes adherence to rules and invites the listener to reciprocate by aligning with the social norms to uphold the shared social order jointly.

### **‘Na’ as an Affective Intensification Particle**

Affective intensification is a linguistic phenomenon through which speakers express subjective emotional stances beyond literal or propositional content, thereby heightening resonance. The heightened emotional state is signalled through discourse markers, such as in English, ‘I am so tired.’ The use of ‘so’ intensifies the affective weight. The particle ‘Na’ marks this affective intensification in the turns given below:

4. "ham° Na ya::r buht" (Yes NA, it does) (Conv. #2)
5. "Nhim° Na::: abi Bhi haim°" (No NA, still there) (Conv. #9)
6. "mosam etNa kmal ka hy Na::"\* (weather is fantastic NA) (Conv. #8)

In conversation #2, the particle ‘Na’ is used with a rising pitch, generating a ‘communal affect.’ This effect promotes shared emotional states among participants, boosting purpose, cohesion, and harmony. Consequently, participants tend to meet each other’s emotional needs and foster collective empathy. It also helps align behaviors and intentions, reinforcing the community’s rituals and shared practices. Similarly, the lengthened ‘Na’ in conversation #9 refers to affective resonance, ensuring epistemic certainty. Such prosodic-semantic fusion is reflected in English as in the case of “really,” which intensifies emotional stances; however, it does not appear in the turn-final position normally. In this case, ‘Na’ aligns with English ‘really’ as it shares emphatic function reflected in Malaysian ‘lah’, which is devoid of epistemic grounding though.

Although gender-based statistics are not the main focus of this research, it has been observed that this affective use is more common among female speakers compared to males. This reflects gendered socialization into emotional labor, with prosodic features like pitch tone reduction (in females when speaking with men) used to signal deference to patriarchal norms. The third instance in conversation # 8, the use of discourse particle ‘Na’ enhances interpersonal engagement. The speaker draws listeners to his affective perspective, demanding alignment. The speakers invite listeners to shared appreciation for the weather.

All these examples rely on resources connected to cultural and linguistic norms for expressing emotions, much like how Japanese ‘ne’ or Mexican Spanish ‘-ísimo’ are used in “¡Qué guapísima!”. Nonetheless, significant distinctions are present: unlike English, where particles are employed for grammatical emphasis, ‘Na’ symbolizes emotional intensification. This mode of affective intensification illustrates how language influences emotions by transforming personal feelings into social actions. Its application varies across cultures, such as Urdu and English, and it plays a crucial role in establishing affinity, voicing identity, and managing social relationships.

### **‘Na’ Emphasizing Actions and Institutional Authority**

The particle is utilized in translating bureaucratic statements into action-oriented directives to emphasize institutional authority. It performs more than merely conveying information; it asserts an unchallengeable institutional reality, thereby limiting opportunities for negotiation or disagreement.

7. → "Tqr'ri az sar Nu hui hai Na." (It is reappointment NA)
8. A1: "service break hu Gai Na" (It is a service break NA?)

'Na' exploits institutional power, making bureaucratic processes absolute realities. As such, the particle 'Na' is a discursive closure mechanism, pursuing ultimate goals through stress. While appearing to invite 'Na' for concurrence, it takes the action to establish a fact, presenting bureaucratic outcomes as procedurally verified and not open to question. Institutional authority is reinforced by the speaker adding 'Na' at the conclusion. This is a metapragmatic marker, indicating that the statement represents institutional policy rather than an individual opinion.

It also serves as a closure of discourse, providing an ultimate verdict and forestalling confrontations. Additionally, it avoids requests for explanation by closing discussions prematurely. In contrast to Relational 'Na', which promotes solidarity in cases such as 'weather', this type essentially relies on bureaucracy, replacing collaboration with conformity and politeness with procedural conclusiveness. Overall, 'Na' is less about softening and more about transforming bureaucratic directives into commands that cannot be challenged. In this respect, it contrasts with German 'ja' but resembles Thai 'ná' in royal decrees.

### **'Na' as a Deictic Solidarity Marker**

The discourse particle 'Na' marks deictic anchoring by creating a sensory solidary space and transforming individual experiences and subjective feelings into a collective reality.

9. → "Yhi tu mosam hota hy Na waha:." (This is the season NA (to enjoy) there))
10. → "kuch din tu Thandi hava lgaY Na baNda" (could enjoy cool breeze NA)

The speaker uses 'Na' in tandem with the spatial dialect. Speaker B's phrase "Yhi tu mosam hota hy Na waha:." ("This is the season there, na") uses the word "waha" ("there") to create a shared sensory understanding between speaker and listener. The particle "na" here does more than just ask for agreement; it anchors a collective perception of a specific seasonal climate in a distant place as an accepted shared truth. By stretching "waha:," the speaker evokes a vivid, almost tangible memory, such as the feeling of the air or the landscape, and uses "na" to invite the listener into this cognitive space. This shifts personal memory into a shared, intersubjective space, with "na" functioning as a deictic device of solidarity: "You and I both recognize this sensory reality, don't we?" It exemplifies a South Asian rhetorical pattern where particles like "na" (or Bengali "na" in phrases like "Shundor na?" ["Beautiful, no?"]) affirm common cultural or experiential understandings without needing explicit confirmation, unlike Sinhala "dā," which requires a direct reply.

Similarly, the follow-up phrase "kuch din tu Thandi hava lgaY Na baNda" ("[One] could enjoy cool breeze, NA, man") highlights how 'Na' emphasizes social hierarchy. Mentioning leisure travel, like enjoying the "cool breeze" in potentially unstable regions ("there"), subtly indicates a privileged status. Adding 'na' to this statement ("enjoy cool breeze, na") presents this mobility as a normal, effortless right for the speaker's social group. The particle functions as a class-based gatekeeper, indicating that both speaker and listener belong to a social level where seasonal escapes are common. The informal term "baNda" referring to a layman introduces a casual tone and reinforces this privileged leisure as part of everyday reasoning.

Significantly, the discourse particle 'Na' here strengthens the speaker's point not with logical reasoning, but through emotional and social appeal. By incorporating 'Na' into descriptions of climate and leisure, Speaker B does not directly seek agreement, but rather enhances



socially and culturally shared agreement, evidencing personal experience and suppressing any potential disagreement.

In addition, it encourages cultural proximity by alluding to worldviews where sensory pleasure, leisure, and spatial autonomy are valued by the dominant. It conveys power in the manner of its accompaniment. Its cooperative tone mimics casual speech, while simultaneously upholding social boundaries by requiring silent assent to the speaker's perspective. This is a broader South Asian pattern of interaction, in which particles like 'Na' employ collective understanding to support social hierarchies that turn a weather report into an unexpressed claim of membership and the right to define reality.

**Table 1: Urdu Discourse Marker 'Na' as a Polymodal Pragmatic Operator**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Linguistic Realization</b>	<b>Cross-Linguistic Position</b>	<b>Sociopolitical Dimensions</b>
Normative Justifications	Turn-medial + justification	Beyond Heritage's (2017) oh/well binary	Supports kinship and patriarchal obligations
Affective Epistemics	Prosodic lengthening + pitch shift	Intensification more than Japanese 'ne', and less lexical than 'really'	Gendered emotional indicator
Institutional Power	Declarative turn-final position	Stronger than German 'ja', less formal than Thai 'ná'	Establishes institutional and Bureaucratic powers
Deictic Solidarity	Co-occurrence with spatial deixis	Unlike Sinhala 'də', it creates unilateral common ground	Elite mobility signifier in conflict zones

## CONCLUSION

The analysis indicates that the discourse marker 'Na' in Urdu conversations explicitly challenges the traditional Western Conversation Analysis paradigm, particularly Heritage's (2017) binary classification of discourse particles. The binary classification places discourse particles 'oh' and 'well' in English conversations into epistemic categories, where the former refers to new knowledge and the latter refers to procedures for the smooth flow of conversations. The Urdu discourse marker, 'Na', on the other hand, along with those two categories, adds 'emotional tone' as a significant third category. Similar to 'oh' in English, it associates knowledge with a culturally shared understanding, while 'well' establishes procedural flow; yet, it actively modulates emotional tone, which has not been reported in Anglo-centric models so far. This triarchy, on the one hand, challenges universalist discourse particle classification in terms of non-Western languages, particularly those from South Asia, and on the other hand, it adds a new dimension to Conversation Analysis. Apart from this, 'Na' also unfolds power hierarchies in terms of linguistic environment, for instance, when it legitimises official norms and bureaucratic actions.

It has also been observed that in the case of 'Na', pitch modulation adds subtle nuances to the statement. Sometimes, it reveals patriarchal structures, especially in female-male interactions. However, this patriarchal hierarchy could be further explored with a larger sample size,

possibly through corpus-based evidence in future studies. What we can confirm now is that 'Na' is not just a neutral grammatical tool; it also fosters a shared emotional and cultural space in conversations, helping to ensure collective solidarity.

Not only Heritage's (2017) binary classifications, 'Na', also challenge the contiguity principle (Schegloff, 2007). This principle is based on the notion that CA emphasizes linear turn-taking. 'Na', on the other hand, speeds up ending sequences by raising cultural assumptions, as in the case of "reappoint na," implying finality, not seeking the agreement. The justificatory 'Na' (similar to "Service break hu gai na?") carries implicit cultural assumptions, making repairs less necessary by treating norms as already understood. The affective ambience of 'Na' enables movement along by feelings of empathy, such as mutual appreciation of views, rather than by strict logic. It illustrates how culturally specific norms of interaction affect the flow of talk.

'Na' is a discourse particle which is an indicator of cultural cognition based on Urdu's open syntax, e.g., turn-ending focus, and shared epistemic stance prioritizing relational harmony over personal assertions. Investigating these particles extends beyond grammar to provide insights into how language constitutes social realities. This view eschews universalist paradigms and embraces Eastern epistemologies, seeing that what Western models think of as "exceptional" are central in Eastern contexts. The study must incorporate video ethnography to examine multimodal gestures, prosody, and particle interaction as well as a community-based investigation on speaker interpretations.

**Table 2: Specific Challenges Posed to Western Traditions**

Western Framework 'oh/well' binary Heritage (2017)	Na's challenge It blends epistemic, procedural, and affective work	Decolonial Insight Discourse Particles are culturally fused, multifunctional tools
Contiguity Principle Schegloff (2007)	Progressivity via cultural presupposition	Coherence is culturally configured
Universal Markedness	'Na' indexes privilege, not deviance	Power shapes linguistic normativity

In conclusion, the discourse particle 'Na' captures cognitive and cultural artefacts through the establishment of social realities that counter Western traditions of analysis. Not only does it counter Heritage's (2017) binary (Oh/Well), but also complicates the notion of progressivity (Schegloff, 2007). The flexibility of 'Na' allows it to manage epistemic authority, assist in maintaining social norms, build emotional rapport, and strengthen deictic solidarity. Its multifunctionality also contributes to creating South Asian norms of interaction, which stress relational harmony rather than individual positions. Further, 'Na' is syntactically versatile. Another interesting feature- albeit one that has yet to be fully explored- is that it is a gendered and classed marker of use which may enforce patriarchal arrangements, particularly in heterogender interactions.

The study highlights the value of diverging from a universalist approach and instead analysing epistemological values within particular cultural norms. Future studies could uncover additional functions of discourse particles and broaden the focus beyond Western and Eurocentric analytical approaches.

We further hold that decolonization of language starts when Southern epistemologies inform theory construction, making "markedness" a departure into a normative process of meaning-making in postcolonial contexts.

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