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# On Clicks in Russian Everyday Communication

**Abstract:** This paper discusses clicks produced in spontaneous Russian speech. On the basis of several case studies from the Russian speech corpus ORD, I show that clicks do not occur at arbitrary points in Russian conversations; rather, they are used in a systematic way as a means to accomplish interactional goals such as sequence management, turn-taking, and stance marking. Turn-initial clicks support self-selection at competitive turn transitions, whereas sequence-initial clicks often co-occur with one or more discursive breakpoints. The ORD data suggest a high inter-speaker variability concerning form, function and frequency of clicks. By identifying clicks as part of a meaningful practice in Russian, this paper contributes to a better understanding of how speakers of Russian employ phonetic resources in talk-in-interaction.

## 1. Introduction

One of the core assumptions of analytical frameworks for spoken interaction such as *Conversation Analysis* (CA) is that speakers make systematic use of verbal resources to help accomplish interactional tasks such as the organisation of turn-taking. Subtle phonetic cues, including rhythmic structure, voice quality, and spectral characteristics (Couper-Kuhlen 1993; Ogden 2012) have been shown to play an important role in this process. Despite the growing interest in these phenomena, many of those resources are still obscure, and little is known about their cross-linguistic distribution. Click sounds in particular have only recently been recognised as a relevant device by which speakers indicate meanings relevant in discourse (Wright 2005, 2007, 2011ab; Ogden 2013; Kendrick & Torreira 2015; Trouvain 2014, 2015; Trouvain & Malisz 2016). The bulk of research on clicks has been confined to data from English (and, to a lesser extent, German), and much of our knowledge about clicks to date has been informed by the study of telephone calls, a special genre which differs from face-to-face interaction in crucial ways (Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Schegloff 1979; Biber & Conrad 2009).

This paper is set out to contribute to the ongoing discussion on clicks by examining conversational data from Russian covering a wider range of spontaneous interactions in everyday situations. The main finding is that speakers of Russian make systematic use of clicks to achieve interactional goals such as turn-taking and stance marking. The paper is organised as follows. In section 2, I will give an overview of previous research on clicks in interaction. In section 3, I will present

six case studies, each of them discussing a conversation fragment from Russian everyday speech in which click sounds are used. Lastly, section 4 highlights the importance of accessible and reliable acoustic data.

## 2. Background: Clicks in oral communication

*Click sounds* or *clicks* are commonly defined as stops produced with velaric ingressive airstream and a loud burst (Ladefoged & Maddieson 1996). Click sounds are regular members of the consonant phoneme inventories in Khoisan and in some neighbouring Bantu languages (Gil 2013). In these "click languages", up to five primary places of articulation for click sounds are distinguished (bilabial [ʘ], dental [ǀ], lateral [ǁ], alveolar [!], and palatal [ǂ]), and combinations of plain clicks with different phonation types, secondary articulations and other (posterior) sounds give rise to unusually large sound inventories. One example is the Northern Khoisan language Juǀʼhoan, which is reported to have 46 non-click and 48 click consonants, giving a total of 94 consonants (Miller 2013).

Occurrences of clicks are not restricted to click languages, however, as they are frequently produced by speakers of non-click languages as well. A first distinction that has to be made is that between *voluntarily* and *involuntarily* produced clicks, the latter referring to clicks that are produced as epiphenomenal articulatory artefacts. Using recordings from a text reading task with German speakers, Simpson (2007) finds consistent occurrences of velar airstream mechanisms at word junctures with a final coronal voiceless stop and an initial velar stop that closely resemble articulatory movements found in the production of „true" clicks. The study further suggests that glottal airstream mechanisms may arise at word junctures with a final stop and an initial preglottalised vowel, though no indication is given of how consistent this pattern is across speakers.

Voluntary usage of clicks is sometimes labelled *para(-)linguistic*, though a clear definition of what is meant by this term is missing in many cases[1]. Gil (2013) includes *logical* and *affective* meanings („yes", „no"; „positive", „negative") as instances of „para-linguistic usages" of clicks in his typological survey. He mentions other contexts in which clicks may also be used, including turn-taking and addressing animals or babies, but it is not explicitly stated if he considers such clicks „para-linguistic", too. Wright (2007) acknowledges „paralinguistic" usage of clicks, defined as referring to the „emotional and attitudinal state of the speaker"

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[1] Notable exceptions are the careful discussions of the terms *paralinguistic* and *paralanguage* in Laver (1994: 22–25) and Ladd (1996: 34–42).

(p. 1069), but argues clicks in English are not restricted to this particular function. Instead, clicks are used systematically to signal the onset of new and disjunctive sequences. It thus appears that the label *para(-)linguistic* is most often used as a cover term for pragmatic and discourse-related functions that are not readily compatible with pre-defined linguistic categories, and a debate that centres on whether or not clicks are used paralinguistically seems not to be particularly helpful in informing the enquiry as to how exactly they contribute to the interactional meaning of an utterance. Instead, it appears more reasonable to focus on the concrete interactional settings that clicks occur in, taking into account all potentially relevant discursive parameters, and examine their form and function within a solid theoretical model of verbal interaction.

I will now briefly review some relevant contexts that have been identified as attracting click sounds in the growing body of literature on that topic. Wright (2005) in her seminal study finds that clicks in English telephone conversations occur between the first and second units of multi-unit first-closing turns where they signal the beginning of the second unit (this context is discussed further in Wright 2011a), at the beginning of new and disjunctive sequences (see also Wright 2007), and as a turn-holding device in word searching environments. Wright (2011b) shows that initiation sequences of closings in English telephone calls have specific phonetic designs, including click sounds and prosodic resources such as pitch and voice quality. Ogden (2013) confirms the findings in Wright (2011ab) and argues that one should distinguish three main functions of clicks in English: a) clicks marking incipient speakership, b) clicks serving the goal of sequence management, including word search and indexing new sequences of talk, and c) clicks used as part of a construction that displays a stance. Trouvain (2015) reports clicks occuring in sequence-initial position and in word-search environments in German. The former context is the more frequent one and includes clicks before feedback tokens such as *ja* 'yes' or *ach so* 'I see', clicks at the onset of prosodic units, and clicks indicating incipient speakership. Curiously, the functional environment of about one fourth of all click occurrences in Trouvain's corpus could not be determined with certainty.

It should be noted that the line between voluntarily and involuntarily produced clicks is not always easy to draw. A peculiar example is the case of *percussives* discussed in Ogden (2013). Percussives are „sounds made as the articulators separate and the speaker prepares to speak" (p. 302), and they are „close relatives" (p. 301) to „true" clicks produced independently of word-initial articulatory movements (see also Schaeffler et al. 2015). He observes that some English speakers produce percussives in the same interactional contexts in which voluntary clicks occur,

too. This strongly suggest that *all* click events are potential candidates for being meaningful pieces in a conversation.[2]

While there exist a number of studies on how speakers of Russian convey relevant discursive meanings in talk-in-interaction (a.o. Graf 2011; Bolden 2016; Thielemann this volume), so far no attention has been paid to the role of click sounds to my knowledge. Against this background, the next chapter will show that Russian speakers do make systematic use of click sounds as a phonetic resource in similar contexts as speakers of English and German.

## 3.  Clicks in Russian conversation

My analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework of *Conversation Analysis* (Sacks et al. 1974 and much subsequent work), extended by a discourse analysis component based on *knowledge domains* (Sappok 2010). The latter approach, originally developed for annotating Russian dialect speech in the RuReg data-base (Sappok et al. 2016), highlights the interaction of five distinct knowledge domains (*thematic*, *textual*, *linguistic*, *situational*, *voice*) in oral communication. Each domain contains several sub-domains (e.g. *reaction* and *initiative* in the situational domain), which in turn provide a fine-grained system of descriptive labels. The model predicts co-occurrences of discourse-related events and (sub-)domain breakpoints to reveal the key mechanisms of how speakers signal important places in monologic and dialogic speech. Sappok's domain-based appraoch is by and large compatible with the basic assumptions of Conversation Analysis because most of the crucial concepts of the latter have correspondences in one or more (sub-)domains; sequence management, for instance, belongs to the situational domain, while prosodic features are encompassed by the linguistic domain.

### 3.1.  The ORD speech corpus

For the purpose of the current study, recordings of four speakers from the ORD corpus of Russian everyday speech (Šerstinova 2009) were analysed. The ORD corpus contains a vast number of long-time recordings of Russian speakers in St Petersburg who carried the recording device with them over the course of a whole day. The ORD corpus includes male and female speakers from various age groups and social backgrounds. ORD is particularly well-suited for exploring

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2  In a similar vein, Simpson (2014) hypothesises that ejectives in German and English are not always epiphemonenal but may present a sociophonetic and/or interactional resource that speakers make conscious use of.

the nature of spontaneous speech in real-life interactions across a representative cross-section of contemporary urban speakers of Russian.

In what follows, I will discuss six sequences from the ORD corpus illustrating the three main functional contexts in which I found clicks to occur in Russian: *domain boundaries, turn transitions*, and *stance marking*. Transcripts follow the basic GAT2 guidelines (Selting et al. 2009) and only contain special characters that are relevant to the current discussion. Click events were identified on the basis of their distinct auditory impression and acoustic fingerprints (see figures 1–3 and discussion in section 4).

## 3.2. Clicks at domain boundaries

The first example is an excerpt from the first recording of speaker S5, a 27 year old female lecturer in psychology, from a scene at her home in the morning. It is situated within a larger narrative sequence of about 3 minutes in which S5 tells her neighbours, M11, M13 and F12, about her first driving lesson, which she took earlier that morning. The small fragment presented in example (1) begins one minute into this sequence and lasts 19 seconds; only one of her interlocutors, F12, can be heard speaking in it.

Example (1): ((ordS05-01.183-202))
```
01  S5:    znaeš' po imeni srazu takoj tak
02         sprosil kak po imeni °h
03         vot Lenočka davaj tak
04         [otžima:j tak tichonečko]
05  F12:   [((laughs))              ]
06  S5:    da da da da da [vot tak vot] znaeš' °h
07  F12:                  [((laughs)) ]
08  S5:    <<:-)>   nu on (.) to est' čuvstvuetsja čto on
09         s takimi lochuškami kak ja:
10         znaeš' rabotaet ((laughs)) °hh
11         vo:t > (-)
12  →      <<click>> (.) nu (.) normal'no tak vyechali po trasse
13         tam poechali

01  S5:    you know by name right from the start
02         he asked for my name °h
03         ok Lenochka go that way
04         [relea:se the clutch slowly]
05  F12:   [((laughs))                ]
06  S5:    yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah [that's it ] you know °h
07  F12:                           [((laughs))]
08  S5:    <<:-)>   well he (.) you get the feeling that he
09         is used to working with idiots
10         you know such as myse:lf ((laughs)) °hh
11         ri:ght > (-)
12  →      <<click>> (.) well (.) okay we drove out on the road
13         we drove there
```

S5's interlocutors learn that the instructor addressed her by her first name instead of the more formal combination of first name and father's name[3], right from the beginning (01–02). S5 is then giving her interlocutors a vivid image of her driving instructor in a reported speech sequence that is characterised by an overall lower pitch register, with which S5 imitates the instructor's voice (03–06). S5 concludes that her driving instructor is obviously used to working with beginners such as herself (08–10). Lines 08–10 form the descriptive peak of the whole fragment. The use of smile voice, which turns into laughter in line 10, reflect the general humorous setting of this scene, flanked by the choice of the slightly derogative self-designation *lochuška* 'idiot' in l. 09, with which S5 describes herself in an ironic way to underline the discrepancy between her knowledgable instructor and her own apparent lack of driving skills. The humorous setting is echoed by F12 several times during the conversation by shorts bursts of laughter (05, 07). The descriptive sequence is ended by the closing particle *vo:t* 'ri:ght' in l. 11, before S5 takes up the narrative portion from lines 01–06 up again (12–13). It is at the beginning of l. 12, i.e. at the beginning of the new (renewed) narrative sequence, that S5 produces a clearly audible dental click (see fig. 1).

Several discursive dimensions are involved in the environment of this click. First, the click is relevant for turn-taking, as it marks incipient speakership at a TRP lacking overt speaker selection. F12 could have taken the floor after the closing particle *vo:t* to make a remark or to ask a clarification question, for instance. Instead, it is S5 who self-selects. Second, the click serves as a disjunction marker, as it occurs at the boundary between a descriptive and a narrative sequence on the meso-level, i.e. at a boundary between two *textual* subdomains. Note that no clicks are produced at minor domain breaks, e.g. at the transition to the reported speech sequence (03) which is embedded in the first narrative portion (01–06). Third, another discourse dimension that can be identified as having a major breakpoint at the time of the click is *voice quality*. For an extended period of time (7 seconds), S5 speaks in smile voice, as indicated by spectral characteristics and an overall high F0 (Drahota et al. 2008). The new click-initial sequence, however, is accompanied by a neutral voice quality. Moreover, it is worth noting that the click is not accompanied by an inbreath. Clicks frequently co-occur with

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3    As it is highly marked to address someone by his official first name alone in Russian, it
     is not surprising to hear S5 have her driving instructor pronounce a diminutive form,
     *Lenočka* 'Lenochka', when re-enacting the driving lesson scene. The use of several
     diminutive suffixes on top of each other in *Lenočka* 'Lenochka' underlines the image
     of an intimate relation with the instructor that S5 wants to create.

audible inhalation, either preceding or following the burst (Wright 2007, 2011a; Trouvain 2015). S5 does produce inbreaths at other sequence boundaries (02, 06, 10), however. Lastly, it should be pointed out that it is not the click alone that fulfils a disjunctive function here, but rather the combination of the click, the particle *nu* 'well' projecting more talk to come (see discussion of ex. 2 below), a change in voice quality (from smile to normal) and a pitch reset. Clicks followed by a particle or an interjection have been observed to be a frequent collocation used for disjunction marking in English, too (Ogden 2013).

*Figure 1: A dental click prefacing the beginning of a new TCU and a new sequence (ex. 1). A secondary burst following the primary burst after about 5 msec is a typical acoustic diagnostic of clicks and can be observed in this example as well. Also note the creaky portion in the micro-pause following the particle* nu *by which the particle is connected to the rest of the TCU.*
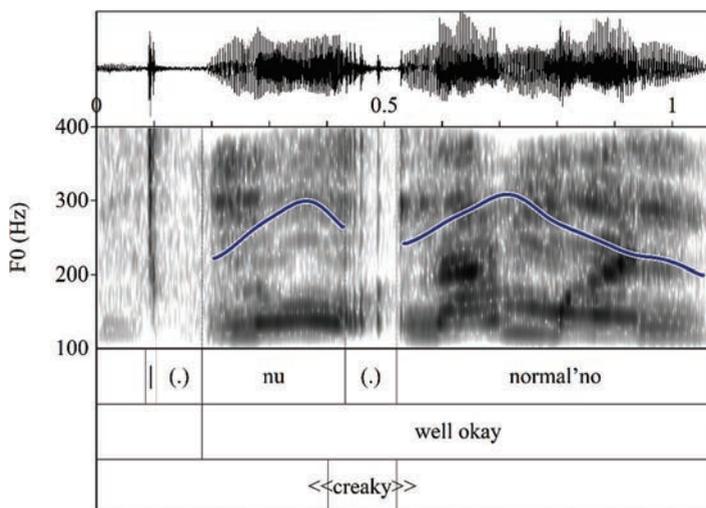


Let us now consider another example of clicks co-occurring with domain boundaries from the same driving lesson episode. The fragment presented in example (2) starts 16 seconds after the end of the fragment presented in ex. (1) above. S5 produces a dental click inside a larger narrative sequence in which she re-enacts several events happening in rapid succession: from regular driving exercises (01–02) to a near miss (03–04) that was fortunately resolved by the driving instructor's intervention (05). The driving lesson then proceeded as usual (06–07), and next, the instructor pointed at an object in his field of vision (08–09). At the beginning of the new TCU in l. 05, S5 produces a dental click. The click occurs

in between two events that are part of a list of events within an extensive narrative sequence. At the same time, it is also placed in between two thematic sequences, one about the driving instructor's actions (05–09) and another about S5's own actions (01–04). Thus, the click again occurs not only at the beginning of a TCU but also at discursive breakpoints in the textual and the thematic domains. The click could potentially also be interpreted as projecting the upcoming reported speech sequence in 09, i.e. the relevant boundary in the situational domain. However, since the interval between the projected sequence and the projector would be rather large (ca. 5–6 seconds), the projection function does not feature as prominently as the other functions.

While the fragment in ex. (2) is monologic, it is taken from a larger polylogic episode. One could therefore speculate that the click is also used to establish S5's self-selection after the end of her previous TCU. In section 3.3, I will present more straighforward examples of clicks signalling self-selection at turn transitions. Here, the click seems to be primarily used to structure the speaker's own monologue (see Trouvain & Malisz 2016 for a study of clicks as hesitation markers in monologic speech). Note, however, that the distinction between monologic and dialogic speech is not a trivial one (Sappok this volume).

Example (2): ((ordS05-01.218-233))

```
01  S5:     a ja tam <<:-)> takaja najarivaju
02           ėti vos'mërki voobšče (-) °h
03           ešče znaeš' > nu ne uverena mogu tam chop tam
04           v odin moment tam čut' v jamu ne v''echala (-)
05  →        <<click>> °h nu on tam vyrulil konečno
06           potom poechali °h
07           poechali na druguju ploščadku zaechali
08           i on takoj mne govorit
09           vot vidiš' tot (.) kust šipovnika

01  S5:     and I am <<:-)> like carrying out
02           these figures of eight manoeuvres really (-) °h
03           you know > well I'm not sure if I can whoops
04           suddenly I'm almost driving into a hole (-)
05  →        <<click>> °h well he got us out of course
06           and then we drove on °h
07           onto another square
08           and he is like
09           do you see that (.) rose bush over there
```

In contrast to the first example, the click in ex. 2 is directly followed by an inbreath. While there are several more instances of inbreath-click combinations attested in the whole ORD corpus, the one in ex. 2 is the only such case out of the seven conversation fragments discussed in this paper. Similar to ex. 1 above, the click is also followed by a discourse particle. The polyfunctional particle *nu* 'well' is omnipresent in Russian spoken interaction and has been

described as a resource for signalling sequence transitions and for prefacing talk, among many other things (Graf 2011; Bolden 2016). Here, a combination of click, inbreath, and particle is used to simultaneously mark several discursive breakpoints at once.

### 3.3.  Clicks at competitive turn transitions

I will now turn to cases of clicks occurring at the beginning of new turns. In example (3) below, the setting is similar to the ones discussed in the previous section, as the conversation takes place at S5's home the same day later that morning and the topics of the conversation are again matters of everyday life. S5's interlocutors are some of her neighbours, among them F1, who can be heard in example (3). The fragment starts with S5 talking about a specific piece of clothing, a coat (01–04). She suggests to F1 that the current weather allows for wearing this type of garment. When S5 completes her suggesting sequence at the end of l. 04, she reaches the end of a syntactic and a prosodic unit (in the sense of Szczepek Reed 2010) and thus a TRP, at which point F1 takes the floor to comment on S5's statement. However, until the end of l. 05, it is not quite obvious what exactly F1 wants to say: her token of acceptance (*konečno* 'of course') is immediately followed by the negative particle *ne* 'no', and no clear indication is given as to what exactly the negation relates to. The final particle *vot* 'well', which signals the end of a non-final sequence, is accompanied by an accelerando, a prosodic feature that is frequently used as a turn-holding device. However, the pitch contour in the passage in l. 05 does not signal incompleteness and the overall pitch level is low, so that the short passage seems to both project and not project more talk to come. When F1 continues her turn in l. 06, she gets interrupted by S5, who has obviously interpreted the ambiguous signals in l. 05 in terms of a TRP with no strong self-selectional preferences from F1. This results in a considerable amout of overlap of about 500 msec (06–07). At this competitive turn transition, S5 produces a dental click. She then continues her turn in which she talks about another piece of clothing, a scarf (07–08); this turn has a total duration of 14 seconds, of which the first 3.3 seconds are shown in the transcript.

Example (3): ((ordS05-03.247-258))

```
01   S5:   ja prosto sejčas dumaju
02         vsë ravno pogoda éto cholodnaja °h
03         možno uže vot è-é
04         odevat' vot éto sinee pal'to tvoë (.)
05   F1:   ka- konečno ne vot
06         budet po[teplee          ]
07 → S5:          [<<click>> ja znaeš'] ja choču takoj
08         birjuzovogo cveta šarfik k nemu kupit'
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```
01   S5:    I simply think now
02          the weather it's cold anyway °h
03          you can already uh
04          wear this blue coat of yours (.)
05   F1:    of course no well
06          it will be war[mer            ]
07 → S5:              [<<click>> you know I] I want
08          to buy a turquoise scarf to wear with it
```

S5's incoming is competitive for at least two reasons. First, F1 does not clearly indicate that there is a potential TRP at the end of line 5, let alone explicitly give the floor to S5, and second, F1 has already been speaking for 1.7 seconds at the point when S5 comes in with her turn. The outcome of this competition is in an overlap of about 500 msec and, eventually, the end of F1's turn. It is intriguing that the main phonetic resource for establishing the new turn in this situation is the click, as S5's voice is not particularly loud, high-pitched, or fast-going, and no other deviations from her usual prosody can be detected, either. F1 does not show any resistance to S5's incoming. Thus, with the help of the turn-initial click, S5 achieves her interactional goal of reclaiming the floor to take up her previous topic. It should be mentioned that the click also co-occurs with a micro-thematic breakpoint at which the focus of attention is temporarily shifted from the coat to the scarf, but it is obvious that signalling a breakpoint within the thematic domain only plays a subordinate role here, the primary function of the click being to mark incipient speakership at a competitive turn transition.

Another case of a click occuring at a competitive turn transition is presented in example (4) below. The fragment is taken from a longer episode in which S5 is preparing her classes which she is going to teach later that day. S5 is talking to several of her colleagues at the department, among them F2. The fragment in ex. (4) begins 25 seconds into a sequence in which F2 and S5 discuss one of F2's seminars. F2 makes a somewhat worried impression, and S5, though busy preparing her own courses and talking to various other people as well, offers her a helping hand by going through some of the relevant literature with her. After the end of ex. (4), the conversation proceeds for another 42 seconds; at a later point in the recording, F2 can be heard thanking S5 for her assistance.

Example (4): ((ordS05-07.175-195))

```
01   S5:    vtoroj ėto Abramova
02          no Abramova idët čisto tol'ko
03          po vozrastnoj psichologii °h i to
04          nu ty predstavljaeš' kak Abramova pišet
05          čitala net
06   F2:    net [(         )]
07   S5:        [nu u neë znaeš'] (-)
08          ė-ė-[ė <<creaky>>]
09   F2:        [chotja net  ] kakuju-to ja čto-to ja
```

```
10          čita[l        ]a
11 → S5:        [<<click>>]  v obščem (.) razol'ëmsja (.) ė-ė
12          smyslom po drevu nazyvaetsja da (-)
13          °hh vot ė-ė to est' u neë po suti dela
14          ėto kak ne učebnik da

01    S5:   the second is Abramova
02          but Abramova is only about
03          developmental psychology °h and that's
04          well you imagine how Abramova writes
05          you read it didn't you
06    F2:       no [(              )]
07    S5:          [well she you know] (-)
08          u:[h <<creaky>>]
09    F2:     [but no     ] there is one that I
10          did re[a      ]d
11 → S5:          [<<click>>]  anyway (.) she's getting (.) uh
12          completely lost in details right (-)
13          °hh ok uh so her book is in principle
14          like not a textbook right
```

In lines 01-03, S5 introduces the second book that she wants to suggest to F2. In order to assess the common ground, S5 asks whether F2 has read something from the literature in question (04-05), and after F2 negates that question (06), S5 initiates a new turn in which she tries to give more details on the book in question (07)[4]. The second TCU of that turn begins with the hesitation marker *ė-ė-ė* 'u:h', the final portion of which is accompanied by strong creak (08). F2 interprets this as a TRP at which she self-selects to conduct late self-repair, as she has suddenly realised that she did in fact read one of the books by the author that S5 asked her about. F2's incoming in l. 09 is clearly non-cooperative, as it is in no way directed towards assisting S5 in her search for words (08). F2 thus ranks the protection of her own face above the face-threatening impolite act of interrupting her interlocutor.

S5 does to not react to the update that F2 has just given her. Instead, she is more concerned about keeping up her (temporary) dominant role as an advisor, and pushes forward to close the question-answer insert sequence (05–06; 09–10). To that end, she initiates a new turn starting with a dental click in l. 11., where she eventually proceeds with her lecture from ll. 01–04. The click overlaps with the second to last segment of F2's turn and is followed by the particle *v obščem* 'anyway', which serves as a closing bracket to the insert sequence.

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4   Unfortunately, a small portion of what F2 says after the *net* 'no' in l. 06 cannot be deciphered due to S5 speaking at the same time.

Since the overlap at the beginning of S5's turn in l. 11 is only about 125 msec long, one could raise the question if the turn transition is genuinely *competitive*. In fact, it is not trivial to decide whether F2's short turn in ll. 09–10 projects more talk to come. The turn-final TCU *какую-что я что-то читала* 'there is one that I did read' (09–10) is syntactically and prosodically complete, and it is safe to assume that S5, anticipating the end of F2's turn, interprets the temporal dimensions of the transition space at the end of line 10 rather generously. However, the unresolved reference of *kakuju-to […] čto-to*, literally 'some [book] […] something' in F2's turn (09) might project more talk to come, and one easily imagine an alternate scenario in which F2, being eager to further elaborate on the one book that she recalls having read, challenges S5's incoming in l. 11. Assuming that S5 at least entertains the possibility that F2 wants to continue her turn after ll. 09–10, and considering the small but not insignificant portion of overlap, the click can tentatively be described as occurring at a "mildly competitive" turn transition.

Lastly, S5's click-turn in ll. 11 thus can also be ascribed a sequence-managing function. In the episode that ex. (4) is taken from, S5 is conducting a series of descriptive and mostly monologic sequences. Her question in l. 05 is built as a short dialogical insert sequence that is virtually finished in l. 06 but is then taken up again by F2 shortly afterwards (09–10). The click in l. 11 thus signals both a return to the descriptive monologic sequence on the textual and to the previous topic from ll. 01–04 on the thematic[5] level.

## 3.4. Affective clicks and stance marking

Clicks have been reported to convey meanings associated to emotionally loaded stances in a large group of languages including Russian (Gil 2013), and the ORD corpus indeed contains several cases in which a click can be interpreted

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5   The English translation of *razol'ëmsja […] smyslom po drevu* (11–12) as 'she's getting […] completely lost in details' in the transcript may be misleading in the sense that the deictic element *she* referring to Abramova in l. 04 is not present in the Russian original and can thus not directly co-constitute S5's return to the previous topic. The quote is an idiosyncratic deviation from the idiom *rastekat'sja mysl'ju po drevu*, which literally means 'to get one's thought spilled on a piece of wood'; the literal translation of what S5 says is 'let us get [our] sense spilled on a piece of wood'. Since it is clearly the book by Abramova that S5 is criticising for being too unstructured, there is still a (covert) aboutness link to that topic. The packaging of her criticism within an ironically used first person plural hortative construction serves to ease up the potentially tensed atmosphere between the two colleagues after the competitive turn transition.

as expressing a negative stance. One such case is presented in example (5), in which S24, a 63-year-old female lecturer in history, is experiencing technical issues with her computer while she is working at home alone. At some point after turning on her PC (01)[6], a typical MS Windows error sound can be heard (03). The dental click produced by S24 shortly afterwards (04) is a direct reaction to the puzzling noise that is now calling for her attention and is immediately followed by a short verbal exclamation (*čto takoe* 'what's that'). The click thus suggests a negative stance towards the unpleasant situation, though it is non-trivial to pinpoint the exact pragmatic content of the click compared to the *čto takoe* – perhaps a more adequate way to characterise the click would be to say that the click and the exclamation are part of a larger construction which in its totality marks a negative stance.

Example (5): ((ordS24-23.0-19))
```
01       ((Windows startup sound)) (3.5)
02  S24: (tak)
03       ((Windows error sound)) (1.1)
04 → S24: <<click>> čto takoe (0.9) bam bam

01       ((Windows startup sound)) (3.5)
02  S24: (ok)
03       ((Windows error sound)) (1.1)
04 → S24: <<click>> what's that (0.9) bam bam
```

Another case of a click used in a stance-marking construction is presented in example (6). The fragment is a part of a telephone conversation in which S35, a 70-year-old male construction engineer, tries to clarify some accountancy-related questions as part of his daily working routine. The parts spoken by his interlocutor are muffled and cannot be deciphered, but from him addressing his interlocutor shortly before the beginning of the fragment in ex. (6) it is certain that he is talking to a female.

Example (6): ((ordS35-06.698-719))
```
01  S35: vy znaete u menja °h ne chotel ja est' tut
02       sto ė-ė printery kupili
03       sto (--) tridcat' s čem-to tut tysjač (--)
04 →     <<click>> (.) oj nu tak neochota
05       pisat' eë ėtu(1.9)
06       m::: da no (1.5)
07       nu ladno chorošo oj (-) oj ženščiny ėti večno (1.3)
08       večno ugovorjat aga (-) nu vsë
```

---

6   There is a small portion of silence in the recording between lines 02 and 03 hinting at a cut-out portion of unknown length, which makes it impossible to say how much time exactly elapsed between the two acoustic events in lines 01 and 03.

```
01   S35:   you know I have °h I didn't want here there are
02          a hundred uh bought printers
03          a hundred (--) and thirty or more thousand (--)
04 →        <<click>> (.) oh well I don't feel like
05          writing it this (1.9)
06          hm::: yeah but (1.5)
07          well alright oh (-) oh these women always (1.3)
08          always persuade you (-) alright then
```

The click produced in line 04 is the only bilabial click in the small sample of con-
versation fragments containing click sounds in this study. The click is directly
connected to the following sequence (04–05) in which S35 expresses his lack
of motivation (*oj nu tak neochota* 'oh well I don't feel like') to perform a certain
kind of work (*pisat' eë ėtu* 'writing it this') that was discussed before (01–03).
These first three lines clearly contain business-related talk and thus belong to
the *other mode* or the *informational* discourse level (Yokoyama 1993). When
S35 decides that his negotiation is to no avail and that he will have to conform
to the requests of his business partner, he switches into the *svoj mode* or the
*metinformational level*, lamenting his unwillingness to fulfil the task at hand
(04–05), only to announce indirectly shortly afterwards that he will eventually
comply with what he has been told to do (07–08). S35 instantiates the change
into *svoj mode* by pronouncing a bilabial click (04) and drawing on general so-
cially accepted themes (lack of motivation to work in ll. 04–05) before he goes
on to playing on gender clichés (*oj ženščiny ėti večno* (1.3) *večno ugovorjat* 'oh
these women always (1.3) always persuade you' in lines 07–08). The frequent
use of the interjection *oŭ* 'oh' emphasises the inter-personal (*svoj*) level which
S35 has steered the conversation to.

The click also initiates a new thematic sequence in which S35 shifts the topic
from accounting-related issues to personal and emotional matters. It is im-
portant to note, however, that the click is not at all used *affectively*, i.e. as an
unintentional and uncontrolled verbal reaction to an emotional trigger. Rather,
it is used support a deliberate change in conversation mode. The ways speakers
indicate such a shift can be very subtle, down to dropping of isolated features,
and the click in ex. 6 may well be considered such a modal feature. Note also that
the transition into *svoj* mode is accomplished by use of a construction contain-
ing a click, and not by the click on its own. The construction also foreshadows
the end of the telephone conversation, cf. the closing formula *nu vsë* 'alright
then' in l. 08 after which the conversation comes to an end. The conversation
fragment in ex. (6) thus reveals interesting parallels but also subtle differences
to the *opening up closings*-function identified for clicks in English telephone
conversation (Wright 2005).

*Figure 2: A bilabial click in a construction marking stance produced by speaker S35. Note the rising-falling intonation contour on the unusually long vowel segment in the interjection oj and the short rise on the particle nu.*
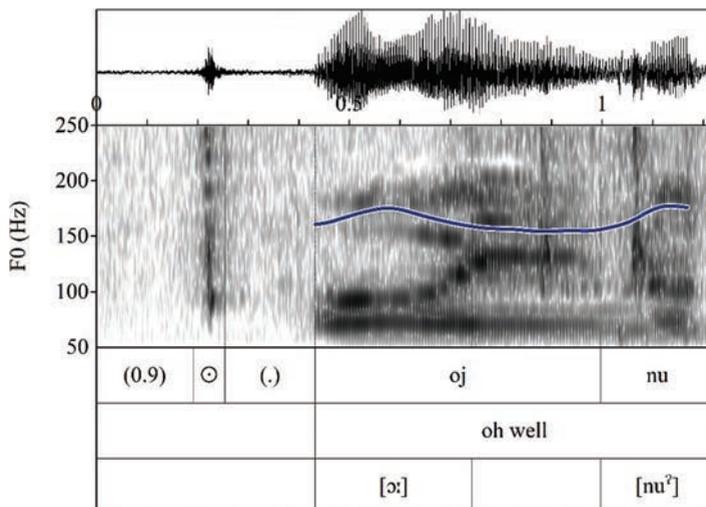


## 4. Further discussion

In spite of the sometimes noisy nature of the recordings in the ORD corpus, which is due to speakers carrying the recording devices with them during their daily routines, all of the clicks discussed in the previous paragraph could be clearly recognised as click consonants articulated by one particular speaker. However, the ORD corpus also contains cases in which it is difficult to ascertain whether an acoustic event that might be a click is indeed a click, or which speaker a click sound has to be attributed to. This can be related to recording artefacts sharing some of the acoustic properties of clicks: a short burst with energy concentration at a specific frequency range, possibly followed by a secondary lower-energy burst. It is therefore important to carefully evaluate whether a potential click is indeed a speech sound in order to avoid misinterpretation of other acoustic events that are in fact are irrelevant for a specific interactional sequence.

Consider example (7) below. The fragment is taken from a longer episode in which S5 is teaching a class of psychology students at St Petersburg State University. The students returned from a trip abroad only the day before, and S5 has to deal with a low level of student motivation and preparation for the class. At the beginning of line 06, a clicking sound can be heard, and it would be tempting to assume that this is a dental click uttered by S5. In the particular dynamics that

are characteristic of classroom settings (Mehan 1979; Becker-Mrotzek & Vogt 2009), each individual can be an interlocutor by its own right, but at the same time, both the teacher and the students may also negotiate a group identity for the latter. When that is the case, the number of interlocutors is effectively reduced to two. Although her role as teacher would normally give S5 certain priorities with respect to turn-taking, the circumstances on that particular day lead to a situation in which S5 is in constant struggle to execute her right to speak and to reduce the noise level of the group of students to a minimum. The idea of her producing a click to support her efforts fits well into this scenario, also considering that the click in line 06 could be said to project a longer monologic sequence (05–10 and beyond: in the recording, S5's address to the class goes on for several minutes after the end of l. 10), although it does not coincide with any of the previously discussed domain boundaries.

Example (7): ((ordS05-08.235-252))

```
01   S5:   °hh davajte tak
02         my da my projavim (-)
03   M1:   čërt voz'mi
04   M2:   ((nrb.))
05   S5:   my projavim drug drugu uvažanie (1.0)
06 →       (<<click>> ?) da i ponimanie (1.0)
07         ja projavljaju so svoej storony ponimanie
08         k vašej situacii
09         k tomu čto vy ne možete mne segodnja
10         čto-to tam otvečat' i rasskazyvat'

01   S5:   °hh let's do it this way
02         we yes we will (-)
03   M1:   damn it
04   M2:   ((unclear))
05   S5:   we will treat each other with respect (1.0)
06 →       (<<click>> ?) and with understanding (1.0)
07         I am going to acknowledge
08         your situation
09         that today you cannot
10         give me answers and tell me
```

The audible impression of the alleged click, however, is inconclusive, and a closer look at the oscillogram and the spectrogram (figure 3) suggests that the source of this sound is indeed far from evident. The clicking noise displays the characteristic dual burst, but it lacks in frequency regions below 3 kHz, which is fairly atypical of dental clicks (cf. figure 1 as well as the acoustic data in Wright 2011a and Ogden 2013). In addition, it can be seen that the overall noise level even in the "silent" intervals is fairly high, with the clicking sound barely standing out distinctly against the background noise. The status of the click is thus dubious, and the analysis of its potential functions must consequently be treated with due caution.

*Figure 3:  Oscillogram and spectrogram of a potential click (ex. 7). Two small bursts occurring in rapid succession (3 msec) are visible ca. 10 msec before the beginning of the next TCU. Note the general noisiness of the fragment, especially during the silent intervals before and after the acoustic event in question.*
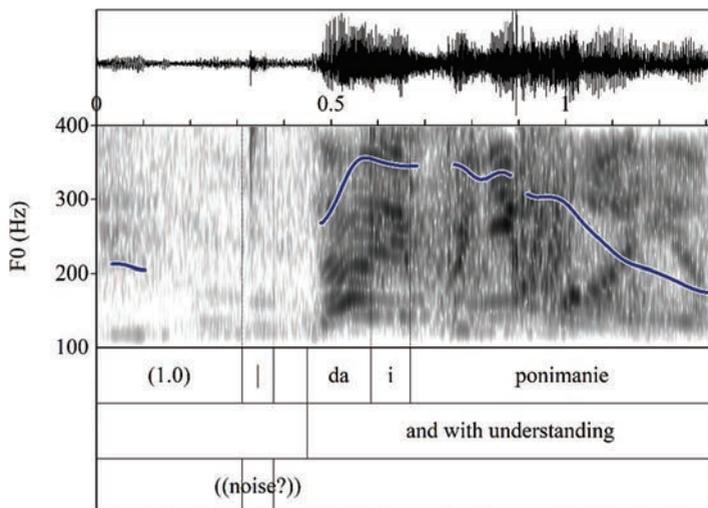


Another interesting observation from the ORD data is that there are strong individual preferences when it comes to usage of clicks. For the purpose of the current study, four full one-day recordings from the ORD corpus were systematically checked for click sounds. Speaker S5 (female) regularly produced a number of clicks at domain boundaries and at competitive turn transitions. Speakers S24 (female) and S35 (male) produced only a few clicks, almost all of them in emotional contexts. S15 (male) did not produce any clicks at all. Previous studies suggest that the degree of inter-speaker variation in the production of clicks may well be different across languages. Trouvain (2015) reports huge inter-speaker variation among a group of 6 male and 6 female speakers of German, from those who produced no clicks at all and those who produced only one or two clicks to those who produced up to 19 clicks within 10 minutes of dialogue. On the other hand, Gold et al. (2013) found that 100 speakers of Standard Southern British English did not vary substantially from one another in their clicking behavior, and that there was an intricate within-conversation instability for extensive click users. The data from the ORD corpus suggest that Russian is similar to German in that usage of clicks is highly individualized, making it a strong candidate for being a sociophonetic and not only an interactional resource. However, more

extensive research is required to study if and how speakers of Russian make use of clicks to construct social meaning.

Finally, it should not be overlooked that clicks are still sorely neglected in contemporary speech corpora despite the fact that they have been recognised as an important phonetic resource for talk-in-interaction for more than a decade. This neglegence manifests itself in the fact that clicks are often not annotated at all or subsumed under a "misc/non-linguistic/other/…" label but not marked separately. For instance, most sub-corpora of the German spoken language database DGD2 (IDS 2017) lack annotations of click sounds altogether. In the few sub-corpora that do include clicks (FOLK, Berliner Wende), they are annotated according to the guidelines for „nichtsprachliche Ereignisse" ('non-linguistic events'), which means that they are mentioned in the transcript (e.g. „((schmatzt))" 'munches', „((schnalzt))" 'clicks') but cannot be searched for via the web interface. Future research on talk-in-interaction would without doubt benefit from adding clicks to the inventory of common annotation symbols.

## 5.  Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that speakers of Russians make systematic use of click sounds in everyday conversations to convey interactional meanings. Clicks occur in at least three functional contexts: at sequence (domain) boundaries, at competitive turn transitions, and in emotionally non-neutral situations. More specifically, Russian speakers employ clicks for marking the beginning of a new thematic, textual, or actional sequence, as a device to help conduct self-selection at competitive turn transitions, and for prefacing stance-taking. While clicks can stand on their own, e.g. as an affective spontaneous reaction to an unexpected event, most clicks discussed in this paper were parts of larger constructions linked to specific discursive meanings comprising both verbal and non-verbal elements. Turn-initial clicks after other-selection were not attested in the ORD data investigated in this study, which stands in stark contrast to observations on clicks in other languages. The domain-based approach overall proved fruitful, as it revealed the interplay of clicks and domain breakpoints. Future research will hopefully shed more light on the cross-linguistic distribution and functional load of clicks in oral communication.

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