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English *why don't you X* as a formulaic expression

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Abstract

In this chapter we examine a formulaic expression in English, *why don't you* + action verb/predicate (= *WDY*). We show that *WDY* is used in everyday conversation to carry out the social work of giving advice, as in *why don't you try taking it again?* We argue that this construction is a formulaic expression because it is not understood compositionally: the *WDY* format does not ask a question, but proposes a future action that the speaker is recommending that the recipient undertake. Our chapter explores the implicativeness of *WDY* for subsequent talk, and reveals the intricate relationship between the grammar of *WDY* and the social work that it is used to do.

Keywords: formulaic expression, conversation, giving advice, grammar, reduction, prosody, dynamic, agentive, deontic, account

1. Introduction

Linguists have long known about formulaic expressions (FEs) (e.g., Bolinger 1976, Bybee 2002, Corrigan et al. 2009, Fillmore 1989, Fillmore et al. 1988, Hopper 1987, 2004, Kay and Fillmore 1999, Wulff 2008). Their ubiquity in ordinary mundane interactions has provided refreshing support for data-driven, usage-based approaches to understanding FEs in particular and linguistic patterning in general (e.g., Bybee 2001, 2002, 2006, 2010, Erman and Warren 2000, Pawley 2007, Pawley and Syder 1983, Sinclair 1991, Tannen 1987a, b, Wray 2002, 2008, Wray and Perkins 1999). In this chapter we examine a FE in English, [*why don't you* + action verb/predicate] (= WDY), taking ‘formulaic expression’ to be:

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements,

which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray and Perkins 1999:1)¹

We show that WDY is used in everyday conversation to carry out the social work of suggesting, as understood in the sense of Couper-Kuhlen (2014): an “action type advocating a future action or activity to be carried out by the

¹ The WDY format is thus a ‘construction’ in the sense of Bybee (2010:36): “... constructions are sequential chunks of language that are conventionally used together and that sometimes have special meanings or other properties. Their conventionalization comes about through repetition (Haiman 1994). Constructions are typically partially schematic; they come with some fixed parts and some slots that can be filled with a category of semantically-defined items.” See also Fillmore et al. (1988).

recipient that will benefit the recipient”.² Our particular focus will be that type of suggesting which arises in a context in which it is treated by participants as giving advice.

2. The phenomenon

More specifically, we will be arguing that WDY is used to offer one type of suggestion, namely *advice* in ‘problem’ or ‘complaint’ contexts: the WDY construction allows the speaker to forward a solution for what is treated as a problem for the interlocutor. This problem can be (a) formulated by the interlocutor him/herself, who asks the speaker for advice, or (b) diagnosed from the interlocutor’s prior talk by the speaker, who volunteers a solution for it.

Here is a case where (a) is in evidence. Stan has called his sister Joyce on the phone; as can be seen in line 1, he explicitly seeks her advice:

(1) “Sandals and a hat” (Joyce and Stan)³

1 ⇨ STA: ·hhhh well the main reason I called you up Joyce was to
2 as:k your uh:: advice on two little matters:. uh

² Our understanding of ‘action’ is that of ‘social action’, “one that is publicly directed at, targets, or is done in coordination with another, typically co-present human being” (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018:212).

³ The notation following the name of each extract is a pointer to its location in our data.

3 (0.4)
 4 STA: I might be going shopping either tomorrow or Saturday and
 5 I'm <what I'm looking for is a couple of things.> I thought
 6 maybe you might have some suggestions where I could find it.
 7 JOY: o:kay,
 8 STA: first of all: I'm looking for: a: pair a sa:ndals:, (0.7)
 9 and a hat.

((several turns later – Stan is describing what kind of sandals he is looking for))

10 STA: something that's comfortable:, that a< that will la:st,
 11 and that you know (0.8) looks: fairly decent, but<=
 12→ JOY: =↑why don't you go get s:om:e (.)
 13 STA: and for the ha:t, I'm looking for somethi:ng uh a little
 14 different,

((several turns later, after Joyce reports that she just bought a hat for a mutual friend Bernie))

15 STA: ·hhhh well ↑where can I find something like that Joyce. I
 16 mean a ↑good hat. youknow I don't care paying ten dolla:rs
 17 or so °or even more.
 18 JOY: [(pt)
 19 STA: [you know a ↑good ha:t, [something that would look
 20 JOY: [(sigh))
 21 STA: something that I'd- u:[I'd have a variety of things to=
 22→ JOY: [↑why don't
 23 STA: =loo:k at[:,
 23→ JOY: [↑why don't you: go into Westwoo:d, (0.4)
 24→ and go to ↑Bullocks.
 25 (1.2)
 26 STA: Bullocks., you mean that one right u:m (1.1) tch! (.)
 27 right by the: u:m (.) what's it the plaza theatre::?=
 28

28 JOY: =uh huh,
 29 (0.4)
 30 STA: °(memf:.)
 31 JOY: °yeah,
 32 STA: why that Bullocks. is there something about it?
 33 JOY: they have some pretty nice things. and you could probably
 34 f[ind one you like there,
 35 STA: [(.hh .hh)
 36 (1.5)
 37 STA: well I mean uh: do they have a good selection of hats?
 ((several turns later, after more talk about Bullocks))
 38 JOY: there< that's where I got[Bernie('s).
 39 STA: [so just go to some good uh
 40 department stores?=
 41 JOY: =yeah;
 42 → for ↑sa:ndals ↑why don't you get some ↑earth sa:ndals.
 43 (0.3)
 44 STA: where's that.
 45 (0.4)
 46 JOY: youknow, earth shoes?
 47 (0.6)
 48 STA: where's that.
 49 (0.3)
 50 JOY: a:nd get 'em in sandals.<they're like thirty five
 51 ^do:llars.,

In lines 1-2 Stan explicitly announces the reason for his call as wanting to get advice from Joyce on where to buy sandals and a hat, further elaborated in lines 5-6 and 8-9. As he begins to describe what he is looking for in sandals,

Joyce comes in at the first opportunity (given the use of *but* as a turn-final particle (Mulder and Thompson 2008)); she launches her first piece of advice with *↑why don't you go get so:m:e* (line 12). This incipient advice, however, remains unacknowledged when Stan simply continues the description of what he is looking for in a hat (lines 13-14 and, after an insert sequence, lines 15-23).

Once Stan has relaunched his request for help (line 15), Joyce offers her advice about where to find a hat: *↑why don't you: go into Westwoo:d, (0.4) and go to ↑Bullocks* (lines 23-24). On Stan's solicitation of an account (line 32), she now goes on to explain her reasons for making this recommendation (lines 33-34). After some intervening talk, Joyce now proceeds to suggest what kind of sandals Stan could buy: *for ↑sandals ↑why don't you get some ↑earth sa:ndals* (line 42). In the end then, Stan positions himself as accepting Joyce's advice in general (lines 39-40), although he has pushed back against her specific recommendations of Bullocks in Westwood as the best store for him to try (lines 32, 37).

In this advice-giving sequence, then, the advice is solicited by the interlocutor and provided by the speaker, who uses three turns designed with WDY. In our data from everyday interactions, however, soliciting advice is rare. On most other advice-giving occasions, speakers provide advice in the absence of an interlocutor's explicit request. This typically happens in troubles-telling or complaint sequences (option (b) above). The following

extract from a telephone conversation between two sisters, Lottie and Emma, illustrates such a situation:

(2) “Stay down-1” (nb009-4)

((Lottie lives in Newport Beach south of Los Angeles, while her sister Emma lives in an urban conglomeration to the north. Emma owns a vacation rental at Newport Beach, where she comes down regularly for rest and recreation. This conversation takes place when both sisters are at Newport Beach.))

5 LOT: it's beautiful: day I [bet] you've had a lot of smo::g=
 6 EMM: [yah-]
 7 LOT: =up there haven't you.
 8 EMM: oh::: Lo:ttie,hh (.) you don't kno::w,
 9 LOT: I kno[:w.
 10 EMM: [go:::d it['s been]
 11→ LOT: [↑why don't] you stay dow::n.
 12 EMM: .hh (0.2) oh::: ↓*I d*oh⁴ it. I: should st*ay ↓d*o:wn.
 13 hhhhhh
 14 (.)
 15 LOT: **Je:sus I: wu< ↓with a:ll that s:mo:g u[p there]**
 16 EMM: [mye:a:]:h,
 17 EMM: *I ↓r*eally should ↓st*ay d*own.↓ let's see this is the
 18 end of the (0.8) .t (0.4) w*e:ll maybe,h I'd say ne:xt
 19 week= <I: haven't got too many clothes

⁴ This word is articulated with nasality; presumably Emma is aiming for ‘know’, as in *I know it*.

Prompted by Lottie in line 5, in lines 8 and 10 Emma begins to complain about the smog she is encountering where she lives: *oh::: Lo:ttie .hh (.) you don't kno::w...Go:::d it's been*. Before she can proceed any further, Lottie offers a solution for Emma's problem: *↑why don't you stay dow:::n* (line 11). Note that Lottie did not have to offer advice at this point: she could easily have joined in the complaining sequence initiated by Emma by saying something like 'I know. I've been reading about it in the papers – it must be awful'. However, in the event, Lottie forgoes this option and instead makes a suggestion that she proposes would alleviate Emma's problem.

We know that Lottie's turn in line 11 is offering advice because of the way Emma responds: in a creaky voice,⁵ she admits to knowing that this is what she should do: *oh::: I know it. I: should stay dow:n* (line 12). When Lottie provides an account for her recommendation: *Je:sus I: wu< with a:ll that s:mog up there* (line 15), Emma reiterates that she should stay down, again in creaky voice (line 17). However, from the way she continues this turn, we can surmise that she probably will not act on Lottie's advice, at least not over the weekend in question, because among other things she does not have enough clothes (lines 17-19).

Extracts (1) and (2) illustrate some of the main characteristics of advice-giving in everyday English conversation as we will conceptualize it here:

⁵ We speculate that Emma's creaky voice displays a kind of groaning admission that she *should* stay down.

- (i) The advice is produced as a response to an initiating action by the interlocutor such as, e.g., (a) a request for advice, or as (b) a troubles-telling or a complaint.
- (ii) Such actions establish a context in which advice-giving is a relevant next action. Borrowing a term from Butler et al. (2010), we refer to these contexts as ‘advice-implicative’ contexts.⁶
- (iii) In giving advice the speaker proposes an action or a course of action that the interlocutor should undertake to alleviate their problem. The implication is that the speaker believes this is what *should* happen because it will benefit the interlocutor.
- (iv) Advice-givers position themselves, or are positioned by advice-seekers, as having experience or expertise in the matter at hand,⁷ which is what allows them to know what is best for the recipient of the advice.
- (v) Advice recipients are normatively expected to take a position in next turn with respect to the advice (Is it a good idea? Does it make sense?), and in the case of a positive evaluation, to indicate whether they will commit to acting on it.⁸

⁶ As can be seen from these characteristics, our understanding of advice is somewhat narrower than that adopted by Heritage and Sefi (1992), who speak of advice-giving sequences when “the HV (=health visitor) describes, recommends, or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action” (p. 368).

⁷ According to Heritage and Sefi (1992), such a position is inherent in the action of giving advice; often there are indications in the data as well.

⁸ These five characteristics are especially relevant with unsolicited advice, as in (2), but even with solicited advice, there are indications that it holds, as in (1) when Stan pushes back against Joyce’s recommendation that he go to Bullocks in Westwood.

3. Data and procedure

Our data consist of transcribed recordings of approximately 30 hours of naturally occurring conversations in American and British English. All are everyday conversations among friends and family members; the recordings are either audio recordings of telephone calls or video recordings of face-to-face interactions.

In this chapter we will be concerned with the WDY format and variants thereof for giving advice in advice-implicative contexts as illustrated in Extracts (1)-(2). But how do participants know that something like “why don’t you stay down?” is giving a piece of advice rather than asking a genuine question about the reason for an interlocutor’s not doing something? Our argument will be that WDY is learned and stored as a formulaic expression dedicated among other things to forwarding future courses of action that will benefit the interlocutor.⁹

In developing this argument, we have relied on the empirical analysis of 48 WDY turns and their relatives (e.g., turns formatted with *why not...?*).¹⁰

⁹ While our initial data collection yielded other uses of WDY, e.g., for invitations, suggestions, and/or instructions (see section 6 below), we have chosen to focus the discussion here on advice-implicative contexts, where WDY forwards a course of action that is presented as resolving a problem.

¹⁰ For the extracts selected as examples in this chapter, we have aimed to preserve (or convert to) a modified Jeffersonian transcription (see Jefferson 2004 and Hepburn and Bolden 2013), with orthography normalized for readability, which is summarized in the Appendix.

These turns consist of WDY that occurs in advice-implicative contexts and is treated by recipients as offering advice. In the following we will first adduce the evidence that has persuaded us to think of WDY as a formulaic expression and then consider what the pay-off is of using such an expression to give advice in mundane conversation.

4. Evidence for WDY as a formulaic expression

4.1 WDY is grammatically constrained

A first indication of the formulaicity of WDY is the fact that it is constrained grammatically, for instance, in terms of the type of predicate it can be combined with. While the predicate accompanying WDY in advice-implicative contexts is not lexically fixed, it always refers to a dynamic, agentive action: this is obligatory in order for it to be interpretable as giving advice. If WDY is combined with a non-dynamic verb such as, e.g., *like*, it will be understood as a genuine question about the reason for a state of affairs not holding, that is, it will be treated as what Bolden and Robinson (2011) call an “account solicitation”. The latter use can be seen in the following extract from a complaint sequence, in which three women are talking about an acquaintance, known to them all:

(3) “Why don’t you like her”¹¹

- 1 R: I don’t like her at all
 2 M: do you talk to her ever?
 3 (0.5)
 4 R: rarely.
 5→ M: **so why don’t you lik(h)e her.**
 6 (0.3)
 7 R: °she’s too nice°

In line 5 the verb *like* in *why don’t you like her* refers to a non-dynamic, static state of affairs: liking someone in this context is not a voluntary action. Thus, although R is complaining here, it would be unusual for M to propose alleviating her problem by saying ‘I recommend that you like her’.

Consequently line 5 is not understood as M giving R a piece of advice; instead R treats it as asking for an account for a state of affairs that currently holds, that of not liking the woman in question, and she provides a reason for this in line 7 with *She’s too nice*. WDY is thus constrained to combine with dynamic predicates if it is to be interpretable as giving advice.¹²

WDY is, however, also constrained in terms of the tense and aspect of the predicate. All of the advice-giving WDYs in our collection appear in the simple form of the present tense. WDY forms in which the accompanying

¹¹ We are grateful to Galina Bolden for sharing this extract with us.

¹² Dynamic predicates can of course also be used in *why* questions that solicit accounts, but in this case we would expect a marker of iterativity (*always, never*) with the present tense, as in *why don’t you ever go into Westwood?*, or a progressive aspectual form, as in *why are you not going into Westwood?*.

predicate is in the past tense are not understood as giving the interlocutor

advice:

(4) “Big boy” (Holt:X Christmas 2:1:6)

((Skip and Leslie are on the phone trying to figure out who could have burglarized their home the night before. Skip has just announced that he saw the neighbor’s lights on.))

1 SKI: yeah. all their lights were on I and (.) I: (.) just took
 2 it that he was probably: eh (0.8) gone dow:n to: eh (.)
 3 you know k- start milking.
 4 (1.9)
 5 LES: oh:.
 6 (2.8)
 7 LES: oh well you ↑should’ve ↑told me that, I'd've ↑told the
 8 police: 'cause they said oh laddie's got very big ↓feet.
 9 they didn't say who:,
 10 (0.4)
 11 SKI: hm:,
 12 (1.8)
 13 SKI: yeah. big bo:y,
 14 (2.5)
 15→ LES: **ye:s. oh ↑↑why didn't you tell me that.**
 16 (.)
 17 SKI: well it didn't (.) occur to me did it. because uh: et- it
 18 didn't seem unu:sual. mean the- (.) farm lights were
 19 o:n:, mean thei:r .hh lights were on over the road
 20 (0.2)

21 LES: oh.

Although deontic rights and obligations are at issue in this extract (see line 7), Leslie's turn-constructive unit in line 15 *oh ↑↑why didn't you tell me that* is not advocating an action that Skip should perform in the future: instead it is soliciting an account for his behavior in the past, and Skip provides an explanation in next turn (lines 17-19). Negative *why*-interrogatives that target an interlocutor's past behavior are not hearable as advice-giving. If the action is one that has already happened (or not happened), it is meaningless for a speaker to recommend it. Advice-giving as we conceptualize it is invariably future-oriented.

Note that there are a variety of verb forms that can be used to refer to future time in English: in addition to the simple future (*The train will arrive at 9 pm*) and the simple form of the present tense (*The train arrives at 9 pm*), there is also the present progressive form (*The train is arriving at 9 pm*) and the semi-auxiliary *be going to* (*The train is going to arrive at 9 pm*). However, none of these other forms for referring to future time are found with a WDY that gives advice. In Extract (1), had Joyce said 'Why *are you not going* into Westwood', this would have implied that Stan had already made it clear that he did *not* intend to go into Westwood. In Extract (2), were Lottie to have said 'Why *are you not going to* stay down?', she would have been soliciting a reason for an earlier decision by Emma not to stay down at the beach. In (1), however, there is no indication in prior talk that Stan does not intend to go into

Westwood, nor is there any indication in (2) that Emma has rejected the possibility of staying down at Newport Beach prior to Lottie's mentioning it. In fact, when WDY is accompanied by a dynamic predicate and used to give advice, the recommended action is typically presented as a 'new' idea, one being mentioned for the first time (see below).

Advice-giving WDY is also constrained grammatically with respect to its subject: the subject must be 'you' with reference to the speaker's interlocutor.¹³ A form such as *why doesn't he X* is not interpretable as the speaker giving advice to the interlocutor, as shown in (5):

(5) "Pop the question" (Call Home_En 6067)

- 1 BAB: so wow. I hope Rabbi Grunner gets married to this chick.
 2 .hheh
 3 ANN: I know(h) th(h)a(h)t wou(h)ld b(h)e s(h)o hh °awesome°.=
 4 <we'd better be invited to the [wedding,=
 5 BAB: [do you think< I know.
 6 ANN: that's all I could say.
 7 BAB: do you think (you're gonna) fly home for it? mhh hih hih
 8 ANN: it wouldn't be< I don't think it would be *that soon.
 9 (0.4)
 10 BAB: ↓you never know↓, maybe he's ner- he is, I mean .hhhhh
 11 ANN: uh heh heh huh
 12 BAB: he really should really soon, you know?

¹³ There is, however, one variant of advice-giving WDY without explicit second-person reference, namely *why not X?*, which we discuss below in Section 5.

- 13 (0.2)
- 14 ANN: I know.
- 15→BAB: **why doesn't he just pop the question already.**
- 16 ANN: .t [I don't] ^know::.
- 17 BAB: [mh heh]
- 18 ANN: I hope he ^does,
- 19 BAB: yeah, ↑me ↓too.

Were line 15 addressed directly by Babs to Rabbi Grunner in the form of *why don't you just pop the question already*, it would be hearable under the appropriate circumstances as advice, but addressed by Babs to Ann about Rabbi Grunner in the third person, it is a solicitation of an account for his behavior. This is supported by Ann's response, which denies knowing the reason for his not 'popping the question' (line 16). At the same time, line 15 can be heard as an optative expression of Babs' wish that Rabbi Grunner should do so, as witnessed by Ann's agreeing response *I hope he does* (line 18), and then Babs' explicit *me too* in line 19.

Yet even if a *why* interrogative is addressed to the interlocutor in the present tense, it will not be interpretable as offering a piece of advice if the accompanying predicate is not negated. Without negation, it will be treated as a solicitation of an account for an action that is assumed to be already underway. We can see an example of this in the following extract from an extended troubles-telling sequence in which Ann has been telling Babs about her boyfriend's lack of commitment:

(6) "Make a decision" (Call Home_En 6067)

1 BAB: well you should. ↑but Ann I think this has to *stop.
 2 unless he makes a (quick) decision.
 3 ANN: *you're right it does*. but like I< I mean
 4 BAB: it's not healthy.
 5 ANN: I k[now,
 6 BAB: [*for you*.
 7 ANN: ↑but I love being with him so mu[ch. it's so much fun.↑]
 8 BAB: [(and so) so you can<]
 9 you can still be with him,
 10 (1.0)
 11 BAB: just in a different wa(h)[y. nhheh
 12 ANN: [but he holds me very tight.
 13 (0.7)
 14 BAB: .t .hhhh
 15 (0.3)
 16 ((sigh)) ↑why does he do *that*.
 17 (0.3)
 18 ANN: hhhheh nhih .hhh!
 19 BAB: ↑why does he do this= <he doesn't
 20 it's not fair to you.
 21 ANN: I know, *it's not fair to me at all.*
 22 (0.5)
 23→ BAB: **so why are you let- ((distorted))**
 24 ANN: it's very unlike him. you know,

The end of Babs' turn in line 23 is inaudible due to distortion, but in this context, we can assume she was aiming for something like 'so why are you letting him do this'. On this assumption, Babs is not recommending a future action that will be to Ann's benefit, e.g., letting the boyfriend do something; instead it is presuming that this action is already underway and is soliciting an account for it, the implication being that the action is unwarranted (see Bolden and Robinson 2011 for *why*- questions as account solicitations).

It is worth emphasizing that a WDY format is not recommending that the other *not* do a particular action. In (1) with *why don't you go into Westwood*, Joyce is not recommending that Stan *not* go into Westwood, nor in (2) is Lottie advocating with *why don't you stay down* that Emma *not* stay down. Rather, in both cases it is just the opposite: that Stan *go* into Westwood and that Emma *stay* down in Newport Beach. WDY thus employs a negative format to forward a positive action. We will see why this is motivated, rather than being a random fluke, in just a moment.

Evidence for the fact that the action being forwarded by WDY is positive will be seen in cases where a first version with WDY is not given appropriate uptake and speakers produce a second version without the preface:

(7) "Put that up" (Auto discussion, 01.30)

1 CAR: do:n't step on my-

2 ???: hhh

3 CAR: dri:nk.

4 (0.7)

5 CUR: [mm.

6 GAR: [s:trink?=
7 CAR: =what there is left of it,
8 (0.8)

9→ GAR: **why don't you go put that up so that it don't g[et=**

10 PHY: [I only=

11 GAR: **=broke any worse**

12 PHY: =got two more cigarettes.

13 CAR: yee:[ah,

14 GAR: [break the whole insides out if you keep wobblin' that
15 barrel around.

16 (1.0)

17→ GAR: **go put it u[:p.**

18 CUR: [°go on.

19 RYA: uh-WHE-E:RE?

20 GAR: put-nah- in his roo:m.

Gary's instruction to his young son Ryan to put the toy gun he is playing with away (lines 9, 11), initially formulated with a WDY format, is reformulated positively in line 17. The fact that the producer of the WDY format subsequently reformulates a negative *why don't you X* as a positive imperative *do X* (line 17) shows that the action being advocated with *why don't you* (here *why don't you go put that up*) -- is positive in nature: *go put it up*, not the negative *don't go put it up*. This suggests that a WDY format, when it is used to give advice, is not treated as a negative injunction, but is rather a means for

proposing a new, positive solution to an interlocutor's problem. We turn now to this interpretation.

4.2 WDY as a FE giving advice¹⁴

As we have noted, in advice-giving WDY turns, the single parts of the format do not have their conventional meanings. In general, a *why*-interrogative, e.g., *why do you always leave the fridge door open?*, is conventionally understood to presuppose the rest of the clause: that is, it assumes as a fact, or takes as non-challengeable,¹⁵ that the interlocutor always leaves the door open and asks for their reason for doing so (Levinson 1983:184). As Günthner (1996) points out for German, such a question can and often does function as a reproach or a complaint, implying that the speaker is treating this behavior as a transgression. However, even in these circumstances, the *why*-interrogative still implies an assumption on the part of the speaker that the action named is a fact. Analogically, a negative *why*-interrogative, e.g., *why don't you ever close the fridge door?*, conventionally implies that the speaker takes it for granted that the action named does not, or as in this case, never happens.

¹⁴ Widespread use of advice-giving WDY as a FE appears to be primarily an English-oriented phenomenon. In some languages, turns formatted as analogs to WDY seem to require an adverbial particle in order to be taken as advice. For example, WDY equivalents in German with *warum* and Dutch with *waarom*, we are told, can be taken as advice only with a particle such as German *einfach* or Dutch *gewoon*, both glossable as 'simply'.

¹⁵ On a 'functionalist' understanding of 'presupposition' in terms of non-challengeability, see Givón (1982).

Yet an advice-giving WDY format does not make such a presupposition. In (1) *why don't you go into Westwood* does not presuppose that the interlocutor will not go into Westwood. Nor does *why don't you stay down* in (2) presuppose that the interlocutor will not stay down. Instead it proposes that (1) going into Westwood and (2) staying down is what the interlocutor *should* do: 'I recommend that you go into Westwood' and 'I recommend that you stay down'. In other words, WDY has a deontic interpretation: it implies an obligation for the recipient to do the action in question (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012:316).

Evidence that turns designed with WDY in advice-implicative contexts are understood deontically will be seen in the type of response participants give them. In (2), for instance, Emma replies to Lottie's *why don't you stay down* (line 11) with *oh I know it. I should stay down* (line 12). That is, she treats Lottie's turn as making a statement about something she knows that she *should* do, using the deontic modal verb *should*. With Stevanovic and Peräkylä (2012) we might say that she displays an understanding of the prior turn as implying an obligation for her to stay down.¹⁶

¹⁶ As Stevanovic and Peräkylä (2012:316) put it, "'deontic,' [can be understood] as conveying obligations to the hearer." In other words, in social terms, 'deontic' implies a sense of 'obligation'. According to Shaw and Hepburn, "Giving advice imposes and prescribes that an action *should* be done rather than claiming that it will be done" (italics original) (2013:348). Note that we are not saying that the advice *imposes* an obligation on the recipient, but rather that the recipient determines how to respond based on their *understanding of that advice as implying* an obligation.

Something similar happens in the following case. This extract comes from another conversation between Emma and Lottie, in which the subject of Emma's psoriasis comes up:

(8) "Leave off the meat" (Nb 014-9)

((Bud is Emma's husband.))

1 EMM: =but uh*:: ah:o since I've been eating tha:t da:mn turkey I
 2 have no (.) i:tching? I have no ↑pro::blems at a:ll. and (.)
 3 some of those scales are just dro:pping off and no itching
 4 no ↑nothing.
 5 (.)
 6 EMM: [.hhhh
 7 LOT: [maybe you[r: pro:ble[m: is]
 8 EMM: [.hhh [hhI °°don't] kno[w°° ((voiceless))
 9 LOT: [mea::t.
 10 EMM: YE:AH that's what I told Bud. I think I'll just eat ↑turkey.

((several seconds later))

11→LOT: **well now why don't you leave off the mea:t.=**
 12 EMM: =[I A : : M.]
 13 LOT: =[**just get tur]:key.=**
 14 EMM: =I a:m.

In Extract (8) Emma expresses uncertainty about turkey being the solution to her skin problem (line 8), but implies that she nevertheless intends to 'just eat turkey' (line 10). Several seconds later Lottie uses a WDY format to

encourage her to do just this: *why don't you leave off the meat* (line 11), meaning 'red' meat), *just get turkey* (line 13).¹⁷ Emma's response does not treat Lottie's turn as having solicited a reason for *not* leaving off meat, but instead as a recommendation to do precisely that, to leave off the meat. With *I am*, she indicates that she is already doing this (line 12) and is just getting turkey (line 14).¹⁸ That is, she acknowledges the deonticity implicit in Lottie's turn, but claims that she had already thought of the solution herself and is currently implementing it.

In sum, we have argued that WDY formats in advice-implicative contexts are not understood as solicitations of accounts for an action or event that does not happen. If this were the case, they would be interpretable *epistemically*, as pertaining to *knowledge* about the reason for a particular (non-)event. Instead, we have claimed that WDY formats are understood as advocating future actions that are presented as solutions to an interlocutor's problem. This means that they are interpreted *deontically*, as pertaining to the interlocutor's *obligations* (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012). Advice-giving WDY turns thus implement primarily deontic rather than epistemic actions.

4.3 Prosodic-phonetic design of WDY

¹⁷ We note the syntactic indeterminacy of line 13, which could be understood as building on *why don't you leave off the meat?* (*why don't you just get turkey?*), or alternatively as an independent, positive imperative (*you just get turkey!*)

¹⁸ The heightened emotive involvement displayed in Emma's response may be attributable to the fact that in lines 11 and 13 Lottie is essentially telling Emma to do something Emma has already declared an intention to do.

A further indication of the formulaicity of WDY lies in its prosodic-phonetic design: (a) the pitch accents of WDY turns are predictable in terms of their shape and distribution, and (b) WDY typically undergoes phonetic reduction when it is a turn preface.

a) *WDY and pitch accents*

When WDY is used to give advice, the turn is designed with specific pitch accents that are distributed across the turn predictably (see also Sag and Liberman 1975). First, *why* begins high in the speaker's pitch range, implying that the turn will be introducing something new (Couper-Kuhlen 2001, 2004a).¹⁹ The high onset of WDY in lines 22-23 of Extract (1) is visible in Figure 1 (left arrow); Figure 2 shows the high onset of WDY in line 11 of Extract (2) (left arrow).

-- Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here --

Second, the main accent of the turn is situated in the predicate and also has high pitch, often as high as that on *why*, if not higher. In Figure 1, the high pitch accent (in this case a strong rise-fall contour) is visible on *Bullocks* (right

¹⁹ Since this high onset is not associated with a reason-for-the-call turn nor with a new sequence-beginning, we conclude that it instantiates another, hitherto undescribed use of high pitch at the beginning of a particular type of sequentially situated turn-at-talk.

arrow), the final word in its predicate; in Figure 2 it is located on *down* of *stay down* (right arrow).

The distribution of pitch accents seen in Figures 1 and 2 is distinct from what Sag and Liberman (1975) refer to as the “tilde” contour, which they claim is associated with ‘real’ *why*-questions (‘account solicitations’ in our terminology). They represent the latter as shown in Figure 3.

-- Insert Figure 3 about here --

Although this is an imagined ‘tune’ for a *why*-question soliciting an account, it seems a possible one to us. Extract (3) from our data collection shows another: see Figure 4.

-- Insert Figure 4 about here --

In this case there is a rather high pitch accent on the predicate *like her* (see arrow), but the final pitch falls only to a mid-point in the speaker’s range, and there is no pitch peak on *why*.

By comparison, the pattern we have identified on WDY turns that are giving advice looks more like the one that Sag and Liberman assert is associated with ‘suggestions’, shown in Figure 5.

-- Insert Figure 5 about here --

However, in the majority of our advice-giving WDY cases, there is also a high pitch peak on *why*, yielding a modified version of this Sag and Liberman ‘tune’, as shown in Figure 6.

-- Insert Figure 6 about here --

Although this example is also imagined, it is consistent with what we find in our data for WDY in genuine advice-implicative contexts (see Figures 1 and 2 above).

(b) *WDY and phonetic reduction*

When an advice-giving turn is designed with a WDY preface, the first three syllables -- /waɪ /, /daʊnt/, and /ju/ -- are often reduced and/or produced as a chunk (Bybee 2000, 2006, 2010). In (1), line 23, for instance, there is lengthening on *you* (*why don't you*;) followed by a very brief break in phonation before the predicate *go into Westwood* is produced. Within the WDY chunk, there is only one strong stress on *why*; the following syllables are cliticized onto it. Moreover, the final /t/ of *don't* and the initial /j/ of *you* are typically affricated to /tʃ/ and the vowel of *you* reduced to /ə/. An even greater degree of reduction may be encountered if *why* and *don't* coalesce: in this case /d/ disappears and the vowel of *don't* reduces to /ə/ or disappears

completely.²⁰ The result is a single syllable: /waɪn/, and the chunk as a whole becomes /ˈwaɪn-tʃə/. It is this pronunciation we find on (2) *why don't you stay dow::n.*, (7) *why don't you go put that up*, and (8) *why don't you leave off the mea:t.* =. By contrast, we encounter little or no phonetic reduction when *why don't you* is combined with a non-dynamic verb and does not function as an advice-giving chunk: see (3) above, where *so why don't you like her* in line 5 is produced without reduction as /sou ˈwaɪ doʊnt ju ˈlaɪk ər/.

The prosodic-phonetic evidence thus suggests that WDY in its use as a preface to a turn offering a piece of advice is frequent enough to have sedimented into a construction with its own special prosody and phonetics. As Bybee et al. (2016) point out, the kind of phonetic reduction undergone here is ‘special’ in that it does not occur everywhere but only on certain lexical expressions, often ones that are grammaticizing. The same point could be made about the intonational ‘tune’ that has come to be associated with WDY turns offering advice. This is further evidence that WDY as used in advice-giving is formulaic.

To summarize: We have presented three different types of evidence for the formulaicity of advice-giving WDY. For one, it is highly constrained grammatically in terms of the predicates it can combine with, as well as the tense/aspect, subject, and polarity of these predicates. WDY formats must be combined with dynamic verbs in the simple form of the present tense; they

²⁰ Bybee et al. (2016:427) mention this construction as the only other case, besides *I don't know* (Bybee and Scheibman 1999), where the vowel of *don't* reduces to schwa.

must have referential ‘you’ as their subject; and they must have predicate negation with ‘not’. Only then are they interpretable as giving advice in advice-implicative contexts. Second, WDY formats have a conventionalized context-bound interpretation: they do not ask for the reason for some action *not* happening, but they advocate or recommend instead that precisely that action *should* happen. Despite their interrogative form, they do not implement epistemic, but rather deontic actions. Third, WDY turns have a distinct intonational ‘tune’ associated with them, one that has high pitch peaks both on *why* and on the accompanying predicate. Advice-giving WDY prefaces undergo varying degrees of phonetic reduction and cliticization, the strongest reduction yielding /[^]wain-tfə /. This type of reduction is not found when *why don’t you* is combined with non-dynamic verbs and is used to solicit an account.

5. A variant of advice-giving WDY: *why not X*?

In many respects, the formulaic WDY is similar to a shorter variant *why not X* (=WNX) for giving advice, where X stands for a co-occurring dynamic predicate. WNX is a non-finite construction and does not have a subject. However, it can work similarly to WDY, as we can see from the following extract. The WNX variant is relatively rare in our data. In the same collection

in which we have 48 instances of WDY, there are only 3 occurrences of WNX. Here is one of them:

(9) “Spenser Studies” (Colleagues RCE 14, 21.08)

((Ann and her officemate Bob are talking about their respective dissertations. Ann has just announced that she is going to have to throw out one chapter of her dissertation because she doesn't think it works.))

1 BOB: ... so maybe you just need to< to yank it out.
 2 ANN: yeah, and<
 3 BOB: and< and send it out as< as a standalone.
 4 ANN: a different thing, yeah.

((8 lines omitted))

13 ANN: yeah, it might work as a separ<=
 14 =but I wouldn't send it to Spenser Studies (.)
 15 cause they're scary. .hhh
 16 (0.2)
 17 ANN: uhm:
 18 (0.2)
 19→BOB: ↑why not.
 20 (0.6)
 21 ANN: °I d'n't know.°
 22 (1.0)
 23 they're >terrifying< .hhh eh heh hih,
 24 BOB: but you know—
 25 ANN: .hhh *↑really hardcore .h
 ann: * makes thumb-screwing gestures with both hands

26 hardcore Spenser people.
27 .hh but I might- I might send it somewhere else.
28 °maybe [()°
29→ BOB: [↑**why not just send it to** ↑Spe[nser Studies.]
30 ANN: [yeah, I proba]bly
31 should actually. yeah,
32 (0.3)
33 ANN: tsk .hhhh
34 BOB: uhm: yeah; or y- yeah.
35 ↑my- [my experience is;
36 ANN: [mm
37 mm
38 (0.6)
39 BOB: is by no means indicative,
40 but there's no reason why you can't send .hh
41 ANN: mm
42 BOB: why you shouldn't send good work to the best journals
43 in the fiel[d.
44 ANN: [no
45 you're righ[t yeah,
46 BOB: [.hhh

When Ann declares in lines 14-15 that she does not intend to send her article to the journal Spenser Studies because 'they're scary', Bob asks *why not* in next turn. This turn solicits an account for Ann's not wanting to submit her work to the journal (essentially ignoring the *prima facie* reason she has given in line 15). Subsequent to an explicit declaration of non-intent as here, WN (without a predicate) thus implements an account solicitation.

However, when Ann goes on to claim that she might send her article somewhere else (line 27), Bob now suggests *why not just send it to \uparrow Spenser Studies*. Interestingly, this use of WNX is taken as advice-giving by Ann. By placing a high pitch accent on *Spenser Studies*, Bob treats this as a first mention, or ‘new information’ (Chafe 1994, Prince 1981): see Figure 7 (the right arrow points to the high accent).²¹

-- Insert Figure 7 about here --

Both the high pitch on *why* (left arrow) and the pitch peak on *Spenser Studies* suggest that Bob’s turn in line 29 is now making a deontic proposal about what Ann should do. Evidence for this will be seen in the way Ann responds: she agrees that this is actually what she *should* do (lines 30-31). That is, she acknowledges that the prior turn implies an obligation to act, without however fully committing to doing so (see footnote 16).

We conclude that WNX is in many ways formulaic like WDY: it is also constrained to combine only with dynamic verbs and negative polarity. Similarly, it is interpreted not as soliciting an account for a non-action, but rather as proposing that precisely this action should take place. However,

²¹ In contrast, with ‘why not send it to Spenser Studies’ without a high pitch accent on *Spenser* (and with a pitch peak on *not* rather than *why*), Bob would be heard as making an attempt to solicit an account for Ann’s declared non-intention.

unlike WDY, the predicate of WNX is non-finite: it lacks tense and person marking: it implies ‘this is what most people would do’, rather than asserting ‘this is what you (specifically) should do’. The lack of reference to future time and to a specific ‘you’ makes this construction a less pointed way of forwarding a solution for a problem, one that is not indexed as belonging specifically to the interlocutor, though it may be so taken, as in this case.²²

6. The pay-off of using WDY to give advice

So why do speakers choose a form of WDY to give advice? What is the advantage of using a formulaic expression for offering a solution to an interlocutor’s problem? A comparison with other turn formats used to give advice in everyday social interaction is revealing.²³ Consider, for instance, the following extract from another conversation between Emma and Lottie.

(10) “Wash them out” (Nb028-5)

((The occasion for this call is an argument that Emma has recently had with her husband Bud, which led to his ‘walking out’ on her. Now Emma is discussing with Lottie her plans for the upcoming Thanksgiving dinner.))

²² We will use WDY in the remainder of this chapter to include WNX.

²³ See, for instance, Shaw (2013), Shaw and Hepburn (2014), Shaw et al. (2015), Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (frthc.), as well as, for medical contexts, Stivers et al. (2017).

28 EMM: ... so I guess Bud's coming down tomorrow ni:ght,
 29 (0.3)
 30 LOT: [oh:.]
 31 EMM: [.hhea]hh I: GUE:SS hi-s- but he'll be here Thursday but I
 32 guess he has to go ba:ck Friday to go to work.h
 33 LOT: ah hah,
 34 (0.3)
 35 EMM: [.t
 36 LOT: [will you stay di- oh well you[pro↓bably<]
 37 EMM: [I'M GONNA]STAY .hh
 38 YOU KNOW I ONLY HA:VE one brassiere and pair of panties
 39 Lottie,h
 40→ LOT: **well wash them ou:[:t.**
 41 EMM: [that's what I(h)'M DOIN RI:GHT NOW
 42 I ↑just CA:ME in,
 43 LOT: oh:.
 44 (0.2)
 45 EMM: .hh[hh
 46 LOT: [oh:.

In line 36 Lottie launches a turn inquiring whether Emma is planning to stay down that weekend, but she breaks off to provide a candidate answer herself *oh well you probably (will)*. Emma now proclaims in a loud voice that she intends to stay down but brings up a potential problem: she only has one set of underwear (lines 38-39). Lottie immediately offers a solution: *well wash them ou::t* (line 40). This piece of advice could have been offered with a WDY format, 'why don't you wash them out' or 'why not wash them out', but Lottie

chooses an imperative form instead. In doing so, she takes a strongly deontic stance: she implies that she knows exactly what to do for Emma's problem, and that there are no contingencies that might prevent Emma from implementing this solution (see also Curl and Drew 2008 and Sorjonen et al. 2017). Emma's response shows that she accepts the obligation that Lottie's advice implies (she should do something) but resists the implication that she does not know what her best option is: in fact, as she says, she has already begun to wash out her underwear (line 41).

In contrast to an imperative form, which treats the feasibility of the action being advocated as beyond doubt, a WDY format in advice-implicative contexts allows that there might be reasons preventing the recipient from acting on the advice. Despite its formulaicity, a WDY format still carries traces of its compositional meaning with the word 'why'.²⁴ This word raises the issue of accountability in connection with the future action; it suggests that a departure from what would be 'typical' (e.g., in Extract (2) staying down) needs an excuse (Robinson 2016:13). In doing so, it allows for the possibility of contingencies that would prevent the recipient from following the advice. If there are such contingencies, the recipient can present these in next turn as a way of resisting or rejecting the advice.²⁵ This is what we find happening in the following extract:

²⁴ In this respect it is like the future reference form *I'll X* in English, which has grammaticized from a verb of volition but still carries traces of that earlier volitional meaning (Bybee and Pagliuca 1987, Bybee 2015).

²⁵ See also Pudlinsky (2002) and Waring (2005) for studies of institutional settings in which advisees reject advice by introducing contingencies that prevent them from complying.

(11) "Take it again" (Geri and Shirley)

((Shirley has just learned that she failed the entrance exams for law school. She is now telling her friend Geri that she does not know what she will do in the upcoming academic year.))

1 SHI: .t.hhhh but I really don't think I'm gonna go to law school.

2 (0.3)

3 SHI: at least not right now.

4 (): .hh

5 GER: are you se:rious,=

6 SHI: =yeh,

7 (0.2)

8 SHI: very.

9 (0.6)

10 (): .t.hh

11→GER: .hhhh Shi:rley, I mean [↑]why don't you try taking it a[↑]gai[:n.

12 SHI: [.hhh-

13 SHI: .hhhhh 'cause I really don't know if I could put myself

14 through it all over again.

15 (0.3)

16 GER: °.p.t° we:ll just study differently this ti:[me.°

17 SHI: [.t.hhh I

18 don't kno:w it's on the Saturday before final exams

19 (0.8)

20 GER: (just) take one later than that.

21 (0.2)

22 SHI: I ca:n't.

23 GER: why:..

24 SHI: because they don't let you.
 25 you have to take it by the end of this year.
 26 (0.4)
 27 SHI: ((sniff))

Geri's advice for her friend Shirley is that she should re-take the exam:

Shi::rley, I mean ^why don't you try taking it a^gai:n (line 11). Note the characteristic intonational 'tune', with pitch peaks on both *why* and *again*: see Figure 8.²⁶

-- Insert Figure 8 about here --

However, in the next turn Shirley resists Geri's advice by raising an objection to it: *'cause I really don't know if I could put myself through it all over again* (lines 13-14). Interestingly, she introduces this objection with the causal connector *'cause*, which opportunistically ties back to *why* in line 11. That is, although a WDY format is interpreted as offering advice in advice-implicative contexts, formally speaking it leaves open the possibility that there could be reasons that speak against what is being advocated. This is a significant difference from advice-giving with imperative forms.

²⁶ It has been suggested that this might be a type of 'stylized prosody' (Ogden et al. (2004). However, we do not find that the prosody of advice-giving WDY conforms to the way 'prosodic stylization' has been described for English: the pitches are not drawn out as level tones and the steps between them are not musical intervals (Couper-Kuhlen 2004b).

Another possibility for offering advice in everyday English conversation is with the declarative *you could X*. Here is a case where this form is used:

(12) “Six shots” (Nb 014-10)

((Emma’s skin condition psoriasis has led to a painful operation in which her doctor had to remove a toenail. Now Emma is explaining to Lottie that she does not want to go to that doctor again.))

1 EMM: I was going to go to my doctor up there
 2 I thought I'll go: and get (.) you know let hi:m
 3 then I thought oh:: god he'll wanna take the other toenail
 4 off'n I don't want that to come o:ff so::,
 5 (0.4)
 6 EMM: .t I was a:ll set to go do:wn here though,
 7→ LOT: .t.hh we:ll you could go dow:n every SA-er [THEY'RE O-uh =
 8 EMM: [yah.
 9 LOT: = he's dow:n there Sa:turda[y, .hh]h
 10 EMM: [ye:ah.]
 11 LOT: and you only need s:ix::=
 12 EMM: =ye:ah,
 13 (0.2)
 14 LOT: uh sho::ts en:: uh this: (.) uh I didn't talk to Do:ctor
 15 Nagle but I talked to his hea:d nu:rse she's a
 16 (0.2)
 17 EMM: .hmhh.

((talk continues on the topic of Dr. Nagle and where his office is located))

In this extract Lottie's advice is that Emma come down Saturdays to Dr. Nagle in Newport Beach to get shots against psoriasis, of which she would need six (lines 7, 9, 11, 14). Yet Lottie formulates this advice with *you could ...*, and Emma responds with simple confirmation tokens, *yah* (line 8) and *ye:ah* (lines 10, 12). That is, Emma does not treat Lottie's turn as implementing a deontic action, but instead as making an assertion about a possibility. Had Lottie designed her turn with WDY or WNX ('why don't you come down every Saturday...' or 'why not come down every Saturday...'), this would have forced a deontic interpretation and Emma would have been normatively expected to take a position on the advice being offered. But with *you could X*, Emma can avoid any deontic implication by simply agreeing with Lottie that a particular course of action is possible. WDY by contrast is more clearly deontic: it does not normatively allow the interlocutor to merely agree with the advice-giver that the action advocated would be a good solution without committing one way or the other.

Thus, compared to other forms for advice-giving, a WDY format is less strongly deontic than an imperative form would be, but more strongly deontic than a declarative form with *you could*. In contrast to an imperative form, WDY provides for the possibility that there might be reasons impeding the action being advocated. If there are, the recipient can mention them as a way of avoiding the necessity of committing in next turn. On the other hand, compared to a *you could* form, WDY makes it normatively impossible for the

recipient to ignore the deontic component: it requires the interlocutor to respond to the obligation and/or commit to the action being recommended in next turn, or to provide reasons for not doing so.

We have tried to show how a FE can become conventionalized to carry out one or more specific social jobs (see Levinson 2013). In the case of WDY, there are several kinds of social work it does. In this chapter we have focused on the use of WDY in giving advice. For WDY to be taken as advice, it must occur in an environment in which a co-participant has formulated a problem or complaint; in the absence of such a context, it can be used to make other types of suggestions or to offer invitations. A pair of instances illustrating a speaker using WDY to make a suggestion can be seen in this extract.

(13) “Your coat” (Chinese, 1)

01→ BET: okay, why don't you take off your coat:t,

02 ??: yeah I really [(wanna-)

03→ BET: [why don't you () and get some wa:ter

In this interaction, Beth is welcoming dinner guests to her house. Here no problem or complaint has been articulated, nor has any uncertainty been expressed; this, then, is not an advice-implicative environment. Thus, in line 1, Beth's WDY, *okay, why don't you take off your coat*, is serving as a suggestion to one of the arriving guests. Similarly, in line 3, her WDY, this

time addressed to her son Jerry, suggests to him that he get water for one of the guests.

Extract (14) shows an instance of WDY as an invitation:

(14) “See me sometimes” (sbl010-9)

1 ROS: ~no. uh: the only reason ^I: work at a:ll is because: of the
 2 money hhh uh: I could (.) occupy myself very well he[uh=
 3 BEA: [mm hm,
 4 ROS: =every day of the ^week.
 5 BEA: mm hm,
 6 ROS: you know I have[a hou:se a big garden=
 7 BEA: [~ye:s.
 8→ROS: hh ^why ^don't you come and ^see[me so:me[ti: mes.~]
 9 BEA: [hh [I would li]:ke ~to*:.]

The important point illustrated by (13) **Virhe. Viitteen lähdeä ei**

löytynyt.and (14) is the context-boundedness of the formulaic expression

WDY: which job it is being used to do at any moment in time is determined

by the sequential environment it occurs in.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued that WDY is a formulaic expression which is used, among other things, for the task of giving advice in the sequential environment of a troubles telling or a complaint. The formulaicity of advice-giving WDY can be seen in the fact that (a) it is grammatically constrained to occur as a negative with dynamic predicates and the subject ‘you’; (b) it is interpreted non-conventionally, in that it does not carry the same presuppositions as an account-seeking *why*-interrogative, has bleached negative polarity, and does not solicit information, but rather proposes a course of action implying an obligation for the recipient; and (c) it is produced with a recurrent intonational ‘tune’ and systematically undergoes varying degrees of phonetic reduction. A variant of WDY, namely non-finite *why not X*, is in many ways similar, except that it lacks a subject *you* and auxiliary *do* and therefore does not undergo the same kind of phonetic reduction as *why don’t you X*.

Finally, we have argued that WDY is a unique means of giving advice. By comparison with imperative formats, WDY allows for there being possible contingencies that speak against the recommended action and, if there are any, invites the recipient to specify them. It implies that if there are no such contingencies, the action recommended is the obvious or typical thing to do. On the other hand, WDY is more prescriptive than a format such as *you could X* for giving advice, which allows the recipient to agree that this is a possible course of action without imposing any necessity to commit to following it. We thus hope to have illuminated the special properties of the formulaic

expression WDY and the ways in which it serves as a resource for users of English in accomplishing their everyday social work.

Appendix: Transcription symbols

Transcript layout

ROS:	Speaker identification
???: or ():	Questionable speaker identification
→	Target line

Temporal and sequential relationships

getting up a[wfu:lly early] [mm: hm:]	Overlapping talk within brackets
back Eas:t. in uh:,:= =New Yo:rk?	Equals signs indicate latching (no silence) between two turns or turn units
(.)	Micro-pause (less than 0.2 sec.)
(0.2)	Length of pause or silence
no:, no:::	Colons indicate prolongation or stretching of preceding sound
ai-	Hyphen indicates a cut-off of preceding syllable
>he'd still get reelected,<	Angle brackets indicate increased rate of speech

you<	Right angle bracket indicates curtailed pronunciation of preceding syllable
<hey	Left angle bracket indicates following talk starts earlier than expected

Aspects of speech delivery, including changes in pitch, loudness, tempo, degrees of emphasis, and voice quality

pa:y.	Period indicates unit-final pitch falling to low
no:w?	Question mark indicates unit-final pitch rising to high
no,;	Comma indicates unit-final pitch slightly rising or falling
they–	Dash indicates unit-final level pitch
ehhh!	Exclamation mark indicates wide pitch range on preceding syllable
GOD	Upwards arrow indicates a significant step up in pitch on following syllable
can you go to the store for me; ↑	Talk within upwards arrows has high pitch register
no:	Downwards arrow indicates a significant step down in pitch on following syllable
everybody do:wn ↓	Talk within downwards arrows has low pitch register
^o:h	The carat indicates rise–fall pitch on following syllable

<u>huh</u>	Underlining indicates stress or emphasis
YOU MIGHT NOT	Capital letters indicate loud volume
°yeah°	Degree symbols indicate soft (low) volume
°°mm hm?°°	Double degree signs indicate extra soft
volume	
kn*ow, Italy*	Talk within asterisks indicates creaky voice
'em	Opening quote mark indicates non-standard
orthographical omission	
	of letters
☺I- I wi:ll☺	Smiley faces indicate smile voice

Metacommentary and uncertain hearings

()	Empty parentheses indicate untranscribable material
()	Parentheses indicate uncertain hearing
(li'l)/(loo:k)	A slash indicates alternative hearings
((clears throat)) ((level, stylized))	Double parentheses indicate a non-linguistic sound or transcriptionist's comment

Other sound-related features

(h)	Word-internal laugh pulse
hh	Aspiration (outbreath)
.hh	Aspiration (inbreath)
hhehe, hehe, or @@	Laughter

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Figure 1. Pitch trace of lines 23-24 in Extract (1)

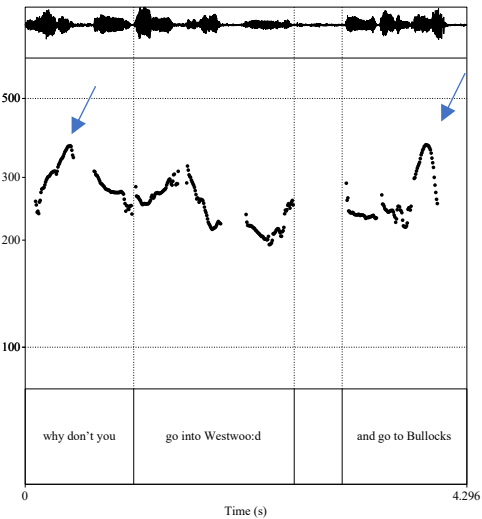


Figure 2. Pitch trace of line 11 in Extract (2)

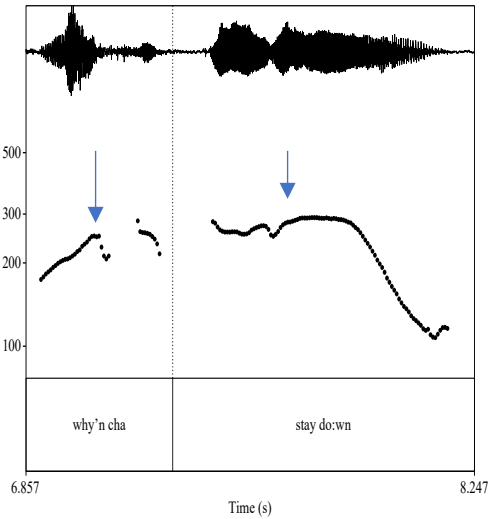


Figure 3. The ‘tilde’ contour as associated with a ‘real’ *why*-question (after Sag and Liberman 1975:488, 494)

Max: Henry, I’m curious—*why don’t you move to California?*
 Is it because you don’t want to leave all your friends in Boston?

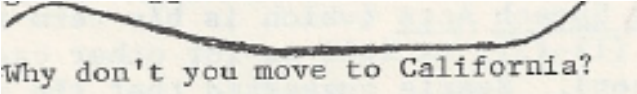


Figure 4. Pitch trace of line 5 in Extract (3)

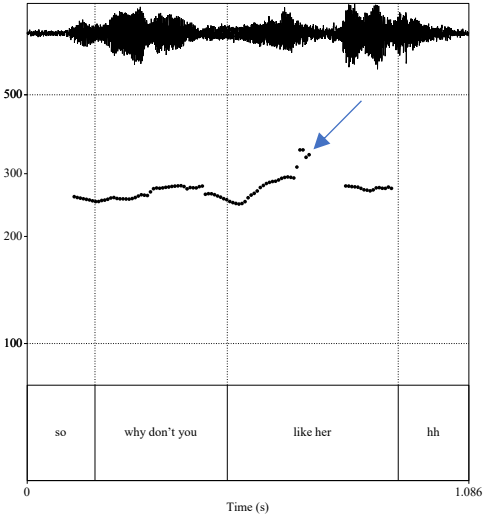


Figure 5. Intonational contour associated with suggestions (Sag and Liberman 1975: 487)

Max: You know, Henry, the climate here is really bad for
 you. I’ve got a suggestion—*why don’t you move to California?*

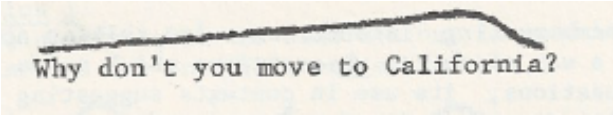


Figure 6. Intonational ‘tune’ typically associated with advice-giving WDY in our data

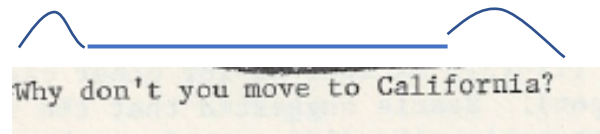


Figure 7. Pitch trace of line 29 in Extract (9)

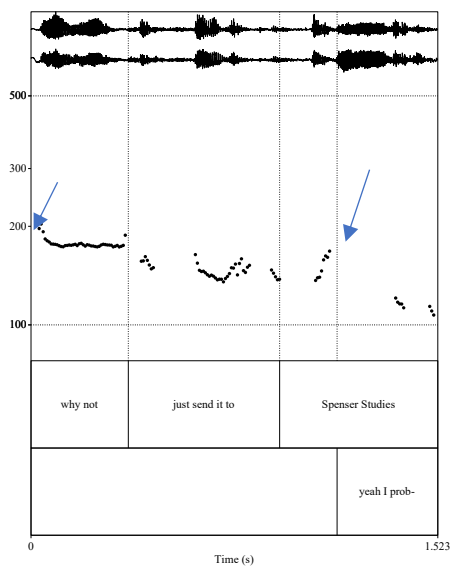


Figure 8. Pitch trace of line 11 in Extract (11)

