



Editorial

Introduction to special issue: Reference in interaction

Referring expressions are ubiquitous in interaction. As Auer (1984: 627) observed: “Conversationalists may formulate ‘what they are doing’ as ‘arguing’, ‘complaining’, ‘joking’ or whatsoever, but not as ‘establishing reference’, although they must continually do referential work in order to ‘argue’, ‘complain’, ‘joke’, etc.” Given the importance of reference in language and as the review below will further demonstrate, it is not surprising that the topic has received so much attention both in linguistics and in conversation analysis.

This special issue brings together studies of reference to objects, space, and events, and of the role that prosody and gesture play in referential work in interaction. The conversation analytic contributions from different languages (English, Farsi, French, German, Japanese, and Korean) allow for cross-linguistic comparisons identifying not only universal principles of reference, but also cultural variability. Previous work on reference and on repairing reference has focused on person reference (Enfield, 2012). There are fewer studies examining reference to objects, space, time, and location. This is particularly the case for research on reference in languages other than English. The articles in this special issue collectively advance existing work on the systematic comparison of the organization of reference in language use. They further demonstrate specific ways in which referencing time, events, and knowledge is linguistically and non-linguistically constructed and achieved across the studied languages. Each paper demonstrates how speakers utilize both intonation and lexical items such as tokens, discourse markers, and phrasal expressions, to do specific referential work. In this introduction, we first provide an overview of existing literature on reference. Specifically, we provide a summary of work on person reference and on repair of reference before we summarize the existing literature on non-person reference. We then provide an overview of the papers comprising this special issue and their contribution to the research on reference.

1. Prior work on person reference

In the field of conversation analysis, most of the prior work on reference has focused on person reference (Enfield and Stivers, 2007; Ford and Fox, 1996; Goodwin, 2011; Kitzinger et al., 2012; Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996), including self-reference and second person reference (Hepburn et al., 2012; Land and Kitzinger, 2007; Lerner, 1996a; Oh, 2007b; Schegloff, 2007a). This work has shown that both contextual features and the position of a referring expression in a course of action are relevant in explaining reference forms. Whenever speakers refer to a person, they have a variety of forms at their disposal (Sacks, 1972, 1992; Sacks and Schegloff, 1979). Sacks and Schegloff (1979: 16) were the first to observe that speakers adhere to the principle of minimalization while simultaneously recipient-designing the reference form. In other words, speakers try to neither over-tell nor under-tell (Enfield, 2007; Hachoen and Schegloff, 2006; Sacks and Schegloff, 1979). Typically, preferred reference formats consist of one-word references which must be recognizable to the recipient. Such recognitionals are typically names (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979: 17). If the coparticipant cannot recognize the minimal form, the requirement of minimalization is relaxed in favor of recipient design. In addition to recipient design, the selection of a particular referring expressing is also motivated by the action of the turn in which the referring expression is imbedded (Downing, 1996; Enfield, 2007; Ford and Fox, 1996; Lerner, 1996b; Lerner et al., 2012; Schegloff, 1996; Stivers, 2007). As with all actions, in reference design, coparticipants’ reactions to the ongoing utterance also shape the formulation of the person reference (Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986; Ford and Fox, 1996; Goodwin, 1979).

The majority of empirical studies on person reference have based their analyses on English conversations. Only recently have scholars taken a cross-linguistic perspective on exploring this topic in natural conversation. In particular,

these scholars have focused on the use of names, kin-names, and deixis (his, her, it, etc.) in face-to-face interaction in various languages and cultures such as Bequian Creole English (Sidnell, 2007), Finnish (Arminen, 1998), French (Mondada, 2002), Hebrew (Hacohen and Schegloff, 2006), Japanese (Hayashi, 2005), Kilivila (Senft, 2007), Korean (Oh, 2007a,b) and Yéli Dnye (Levinson, 2007). These studies understand the system of person reference as an interactional accomplishment through which participants communicate not only their reference to the world, but also their positioning within the socio-contextual and discursive spaces. Moreover, these studies point to additional principles according to which person reference is organized, as the following chart from Enfield (2012) describes:

Schema 1: (Enfield, 2012: 443)

Summary of 'preference' type principles for reference to persons

- i. Design the expression for the recipient
 - a. achieve recognition
 - b. invoke or display relationship proximity/type
- ii. Minimize the expressive means
 - a. use a single referring expression
 - b. use a name rather than description
 - c. use only one name from a binomial if possible
- iii. Fit the expressive format to the action being performed
- iv. Observe local cultural/institutional constraints
- v. Associate the referent explicitly with one of the speech participants

2. Prior work on reference other than person reference

The body of work on reference other than person reference is considerably smaller. The earliest studies of this kind focused on place and spatial references (Auer, 1979; Heritage, 2007; Schegloff, 1972). In recent years, spatial references have increasingly incorporated the analysis of multi-modal elements, including pointing (de Stefanie, 2010; Enfield et al., 2007; Kita, 2013). Speakers use pointing not only to identify place referents, but also to identify objects (Hindmarsh and Heath, 2000; Kita, 2013; Koschmann et al., 2006; Mondada, 2014), which of course can also be accomplished lexically, for instance via the use of demonstratives (Eriksson, 2009; Kohlman, 1997). Another set of studies has shown that speakers can also accomplish other actions via reference formulation. For example, clarifications can be done by explicating a referent that has been referred to tacitly (Bolden and Guimaraes, 2012), responses can be pursued in the course of a reference repair (Bolden et al., 2012), and teases can be expressed via reference forms (Margutti, 2007).

3. Prior work on understanding reference

Typically, speakers do not overtly mark that they have understood a prior reference; instead, understanding is implied by the coparticipant producing the appropriate next action. As Heritage (2007: 259) puts it, "Recognition is treated as the 'default' condition of recognitional person reference." If problems in reference recognition do occur, interactants can use either self- or other initiated repair in order to re-establish intersubjectivity (Schegloff et al., 1977). However, it should be noted that co-participants can also be observed waiting to see if recognition of the referent can be established with the speaker's following turns (Auer, 1984). Various studies have examined how/why reference recognition can become problematic and how these problems are subsequently addressed with specific linguistic and non-linguistic means (Egbert, 1996, 1997; Egbert et al., 2009; Golato, 2013; Hepburn et al., 2012; Lerner and Kitzinger, 2007; Lerner et al., 2012; Sidnell, 2007).

As has been shown for repair in general, the repair-initiation of referring expressions is typically specific as to the nature of the problem (Egbert, 2009; Schegloff et al., 1977; Selting, 1987a,b,c). However, in reference repairs, speakers do not initiate the repair as early as possible, but instead wait until the end of the prior TCU, i.e., until it is clear that the prior speaker is not self-repairing the reference formulation (Auer, 1984). Other-initiated repair of referring expressions can occur because of an acoustic problem, a problem of expectation, or a problem with the reference formulation itself (Selting, 1987a,b,c, 1988, 1991, 1992; Sidnell, 2007). Speakers can also be seen to negotiate whose "fault" the break in intersubjectivity might be (Robinson, 2006).

Speakers can also attempt to pre-empt reference problems (Svennevig, 2010). If a speaker uses try-marking (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 2007b), the coparticipants respond in such a way as to return to the progressivity of the sequence as quickly as possible (i.e., by providing a short yes or by producing the recognition in overlap with the repair) (Heritage, 2007). Responses to try-marking only become more elaborate if the initial repair is not successful (Heritage, 2007; Sidnell, 2007).

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