

Turn organization and bodily-vocal demonstrations[☆]Leelo Keevallik^{*}*Department of Culture and Communication, Linköping University, Sweden*

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Abstract

The study focuses on turns in interaction that involve a bodily-vocal demonstration: an embodied demonstration that is accompanied by a non-lexical vocalization. It shows how the temporal organization of these demonstrations contributes to participant treatment of them as a part of a turn-constructive unit, mostly as its completion. It is also suggested that a bodily-vocal demonstration may function as a separate turn-constructive unit, with a transition relevance point before it, and other participants refraining from action before its completion. Vocalizations, occasionally with coherent pitch contours of intonation units, are argued to render bodily displays vocal space within turns-at-talk. After a bodily-vocal demonstration, the turn-constructive unit can be recompleted with verbal devices, displaying further similarity to verbal-only turns. The analysis calls into attention the relevance of embodied behavior to the emergence of units in conversation.

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1. Introduction

The recent explosion of studies on temporally evolving interaction in an embodied world has substantially transformed the way we think about language and its role in human sense-making. On the one hand, it has become clear that the building-block understanding of grammar should be abandoned in favor of a dynamic resources-and-processes approach (Ford, 2004; Linell, 2013). On the other, we have learned that speaker turns are supported by embodied devices, such as gaze and gesture (Goodwin, 1980; Stivers and Sidnell, 2005; Mondada, 2006, 2007; Enfield, 2009). Besides, turns have themselves been shown to contain complex spates of multimodal interaction (Iwasaki, 2011), to the extent that they should more adequately be conceptualized as “a temporally unfolding, interactively sustained domain of multimodal conduct through which both the speaker and recipients build in concert with one another relevant actions that contribute to the further progression of the activity in progress” (Hayashi, 2005: 21). The current paper ventures further into the dynamic methods of doing language, focusing on turns where bodily conduct interplays with grammar in the initiation, projection and completion of the emerging unit.

Bodily-visual displays have been shown to figure in several ways in turn- and unit-construction. Gestures can assist in turn-taking (Mondada, 2007) and contribute crucially to sense-making (Enfield, 2009); bodily-visual displays may be produced at turn-completion and add a stance to it (Ford et al., 2012). These studies show that in addition to syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic matters (Ford et al., 1996; Ford and Thompson, 1996), embodied behavior can be relevant in turn organization. This study focuses on cases when embodied demonstrations are accompanied by non-lexical vocalizations. Vocalizations constitute a method of filling up the vocal space during the bodily-visual contribution. Earlier studies involving vocalizations in interaction have demonstrated a number of interesting phenomena. Together

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with gestures and other semiotic resources, nonsense syllables can help to build entire turns and actions (Goodwin et al., 2002). Vocalizations have been shown to occur in enactments (such as response cries) and “body quotes” in interaction (Streeck, 2002; Sidnell, 2006; Fox and Robles, 2010). They can also accomplish the crucial actions of assessing and directing in music and dance instruction (Keevallik, 2013; Tolins, 2013). The term *bodily-vocal demonstration* used for the phenomenon in the current study underlines the primacy of the embodied display, suggesting a gentle boundary between bodily-vocal demonstrations and emotional vocal displays, including response cries, as discussed in e.g. Fox and Robles (2010), as well as a slight difference from vocal performances that primarily represent sounds, such as car horns and music (Sidnell, 2006: 383; Tolins, 2013). In bodily-vocal demonstrations the vocalizations support the bodily displays, reinforcing their interactional task. It is argued that these demonstrations are turn-organized and by extension, other kinds of bodily displays may be too, even when they are accompanied by silence. Pauses in the stream of talk may in fact be filled with segments of embodied action that build interactional units, as is nicely shown by Seo and Koshik (2010) or bring them to a recognizable completion, as argued in Keevallik (2013).

Turn-organization has canonically been understood in terms of grammar and the combinatory possibilities of various turn-constructional units (TCUs) (e.g. Schegloff, 1996). In the programmatic article by Sacks et al. (1974), TCUs were outlined as sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions. This followed from the authors’ distinct interest in conversation and from working with telephone data. Later research has underlined the dynamic nature of turns as opportunities for different actors to participate in (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987; Hayashi, 2005; Iwasaki, 2011), and suggested that units can be built by combining clausal syntax and bodily demonstrations (Keevallik, 2013). Interactional linguists have started to talk about on-line units that are sensitive to local contingencies and constantly available for renegotiation (Ford, 2004; Auer, 2005; Linell, 2013). This research has taken into consideration different modalities involved in the process of unit-construction, in particular gestures and gaze. The present study aims to propose that similarly to grammatical elements, the embodied demonstrations may be in the service of providing the participants with recognizable initiations and projections of possible completion points, thereby being part of the systematics of turn-taking. This is what the seminal paper claimed:

We have proposed that the allocation of turn-space is organized around the construction of the talk IN the turns. That organization appears to key on one main feature of the construction of the talk in a turn – namely, that whatever the units employed for the construction, and whatever the theoretical language used to describe them, they still have points of possible turn completion, points which are projectable before their occurrence (Sacks et al., 1974: 720).

In addition to “construction of the talk” we would suggest including “embodied resources” among the means used for designing turns and TCUs. This is controversial, as turns have traditionally been understood as turns-at-talk, as vocal conduct. But occasionally turns seem to be developed with other types of materials, so that their allocation is also organized around these alternative materials. Talk clearly benefits from the specifics of grammatical projection. It also imposes physical demands on vocal space. On the one hand, turns built with linguistic resources interchangeably with bodily ones may be initiated and completed similarly to verbal-only turns. On the other hand they also display some differences. First, embodied displays may be accomplished or held during talk. And in contrast to this, the vocal turn-space can be filled by a non-lexical vocalization while the body performs. Second, embodied displays do not necessarily have an elaborate internal (e.g. grammatical) structure that corresponds to verbal units. While linguistic projection is based on knowledge of how the elements of a superordinated category are serialized in online speech production (Auer, 2009: 180), the body is not usually organized around superordinated categories. Characteristically, initiation and completion of such units is better understood with close attention to the ongoing activity, which may feature intrinsic starting and stopping points, or home positions (Li, 2013). In the following, bodily-vocal demonstrations will be analyzed in regard to their potential of constructing separate TCUs.

Two types of video data are used. First, a workplace meeting between an artist, a head of a theater workshop and several craftsmen, comprising 1.5 h of data in Estonian. Second, there are approximately 30 h of dance classes in English, Swedish and Estonian. All the participants have agreed to the recording and publication of the materials.

The paper starts by scrutinizing a case where a bodily-vocal demonstration potentially constitutes a TCU during an ongoing professional argument. It will then move on to show how a bodily-vocal demonstration can complete a TCU and how participants negotiate its completion in an activity-specific manner. It is also discussed how units involving bodily-vocal demonstrations can be built further. Finally, it is argued that close analytic attention to the body may reveal that participants occasionally orient to qualitatively different completions as compared to grammatical-lexical ones.

2. Bodily-vocal demonstration as a TCU?

TCUs have been characterized as contingently emerging spates of language, defined by the relevance of turn-transition at the end, as oriented to by the participants (Sacks et al., 1974; Ford and Thompson, 1996; Selting, 2000). They may be of variable length and grammatical substance, and furthermore expandable after completion points. One of the

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