

MAKING REFERENTS ACCESSIBLE IN MULTI-PARTY INTERACTION

Chiara M. Monzoni and Ritva Laury

University of Helsinki

Abstract. The paper discusses cases in which referents that have not been mentioned previously are assessed without any overt mention of those referents but are rather made accessible through multimodal means, which are finely calibrated with what else is going on in the conversation. The authors suggest that the cases discussed raise important questions about reference and referentiality. The data are multiperson conversations in Italian and Finnish.

Keywords: multimodality, multiperson conversation, reference, accessibility, Finnish, Italian

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2015.6.2.02>

1. Introduction

Our paper concerns the ways that referents concretely present in the situation are made focal in conversation using multimodal means, including bodily action, in Finnish and Italian multiperson interaction. We analyze cases in which an entity that has not been discussed previously is being evaluated verbally, but there is no overt lexical mention of that entity. In previous linguistic research on the use of referential forms, it has been commonly assumed that the condition for the use of zero or minimal forms such as pronouns, is that the referents must be ‘given’ or ‘focal’; the most common source of givenness is has been assumed to be prior mention (e.g. Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993, Gundel 2010, for Italian, see Renzi 1988). Such an assumption is also encoded into the term ‘locally subsequent form’ in conversation analytic research (Schegloff 1996). However, earlier work has also shown that pronominal mentions of referents can occur in the absence of any prior verbal mention of an antecedent (Laury 1994, 2005, Cornish 1996, 1999). More relevantly, it has also been observed by both linguists and conversation analysts that salient presence in the environment can also

license minimal forms. Thus Chafe (1994: 79) mentions that a referent can be brought into the focal consciousness of the listener by means other than mention, such as showing, and Golato (2005: 67) suggests that gaze and the assumption that other participants are attending to the same thing are involved; such factors are also mentioned by Chafe (1994) and Cornish (1999)¹. Further, our data involve assessments. It has been noted by Etelämäki, Haakana and Halonen (2013) that the structure of compliments is normally simple. Further, the structure of assessments, rather their metrics, is often dependent on the exploitation of multi-modal resources (cf. Goodwin and Goodwin 1987, Ogden 2006), including embodied ones, and the manipulation of objects through which participants display and organize their attention to and perception of the entities that are being assessed (cf. Lindström and Mondada 2009, *inter alia*). More importantly for the cases we are going to analyse in this paper, embodied resources are used even before the assessments are going to be delivered (Fasulo and Monzoni 2009, Mondada 2009).

In this paper, through a micro-analysis of two extracts, one from Finnish, and the other from Italian conversation, we will show how not only gaze but also other bodily actions are used by participants to bring referents into focus, and in such contexts, *no explicit verbal mention* of the entity being discussed need to be made. We will also show that the use of multimodal means is finely calibrated with what the participants, both the speaker and the recipient(s), are doing at the moment and what is going on in the interaction on a number of levels. Finally, we will discuss questions concerning reference and referentiality which are raised by our data.

2. The Finnish and Italian grammatical resources for referring

Both Finnish and Italian distinguish between three grammatical persons in singular and plural, and in both languages, verbs are person marked. In Finnish, while first and second person subject pronouns are not obligatory with inflected verbs, their use is more common in the spoken language than in the written language (e.g. Hakulinen et al. 2003: 871, see also Helasvuo 2014). On the other hand, the use of bare, subjectless verbs in the third person is thought to be restricted even in spoken Finnish to specific contexts such as verb repeat responses and same subject coordination and to certain verbs such as ones expressing

¹ However, neither Cornish nor Chafe provide actual examples.

weather events (Hakulinen et al. 2004 §1431). Italian, in contrast, is what is often called a pro-drop language: pronouns are not ordinarily used, but rather, only a person-inflected verb is used when the subject referent is focal (Rizzi 1982). In fact, Italian no longer uses a non-human third person pronoun for reference to either animates or inanimates in either spoken or written language (but does use personal pronouns, which are marked for gender). Finnish also uses a ‘zero’ form with third person inflected verbs (the so-called *nollapersoona* ‘zero person’), but this construction has particular conditions of use and pragmatic functions; in such cases, the zero has open reference and can even refer to the speaker or addressee (Laitinen 1995, Hakulinen et al. 2003: 1283–1300).

In sum, in spoken Finnish, subject pronouns are ordinarily used except in certain specific syntactic and pragmatic conditions such as the second part of coordinated clauses with coreferential subjects, or in other tying contexts, such as second pair parts of an adjacency pair (see Hakulinen et al 2004: 1218–1219), and in the ‘zero subject’ construction. In Italian, in contrast, lack of overt mention is an unmarked choice when the referent is “identifiable from its linguistic context (Renzi 1988: 120)”. Consider the following examples. The Finnish example comes from the corpus of Finnish conversations housed at the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Helsinki, and the Italian examples from the first author’s personal collection.

The first example, illustrating the unmarked use of pronominals with inflected verbs in Finnish, comes from a telephone conversation. Two women are discussing flowers planted at a gravesite.

(1) SG142 a12 Markareetta

1 Ella ↑joko mä sanoin sulle muuten haudasta puheenollen että-
Did I tell you already regarding the grave that-

2 taisin sanoo jo että kiitos siitä vinkistä
I may have already said thanks for the tip

3 ettei ote-ttu si-tä markareetta-a
COMP-NEG take.PASS.PTC DEM3-PRT daisy-PRT

siel-tä irti sillon? .h.:=
DEM3.LOC-ABL off DEM3.TEMP

that we didn’t take the daisy out (of the ground) then

4 Saara =ai[jaa.

PTC

Oh, I see.

5 Ella: [kun käy-t-i-in. hh

when visit.PASS-PST-PERS

when we visited.

6 tiäksää että (.) **se on** niin <mahtava-s[sa
 you.know COMP DEM3 be.3SG.PRS SO great-INE

kunno-ssa>

condition-INE

You know it's in such great condition

7 Saara:

[ja:.

PTC

I see.

8 Ella: tiäksää että **mä e-n** n::äh-ny sellas-ta
 you.know COMP 1SG NEG-1SG see-PPL such-PRT

markareetta-a kuule,

daisy-PRT PTC

you know that I haven't seen such a daisy you know.

The example shows an uneventful introduction of a new referent into the conversation with a full lexical NP, *sitä markareettaa* ‘the daisy’ (line 3), which is then followed by a pronominal mention *se* ‘it’ of the now-focal, or given, referent (line 6). Note that although the copula in line 6 is in the dedicated third person form *on* ‘is’, the plant is still referred to with a separate pronoun. Note also the first person singular pronominal mention *mä* ‘I’ just prior to the negative verb *en* in its first person singular form (line 8).

The Finnish example in (1) stands in contrast with the following Italian example. The example is taken from a story-telling sequence during a multi-person dinner-table conversation. Federica is telling about having bought a sofa bed and she is reporting when she first talked to the shop-keeper (“this lady”, mentioned in line 1).

(2) [CMM:BOX98:cot:10–13]

- 1 FE: poi mi fa (.8) **questa signora** s:e lo
 then me.DAT make.3SG (.8) this lady CLT it
 then (.8) **this lady** says to me
- 2 FE: prenda perché ho bisogno di liberare
 take.3SG.IMP because have.1sg need to clear
 la vetrina che devo
 the window that must.1sg
 take it because (I) need to clear the window that (I) must
- 3 FE: portare- che >era da tanto che
 bring.INF that >be.3SG.IMP since long that
 l'aveva li<
 have.3SG.IMP there<
 bring- because >(she) had it there for long<
- 4 FE: dice le faccio un buon prezzo.
 say.3SG you.DAT make.1sg a good price
 (She) says I'll make you a good price.

In line 1, when Federica first mentions the shopkeeper she talked to, she uses a full NP, *questa signora* 'this lady'. However, when she continues the telling she does not use any pronominal forms in referring to her: *ave-va* 'have-3SG.IMP, (she) had' (l. 3), *di-ce* 'say-3SG, (she) says' (l. 4). Note also that when Federica reports the direct reported speech by the shopkeeper (in the first person singular), here too she never uses pronouns (l. 2: *h-o bisogno* 'have-1SG need; *dev-o* 'must-1SG'; l. 4 *fa-ccio* 'make-1SG'). These constructions are thought to be possible since the subject of the verb is already indicated in the conjugation of the verb (the 'pro-drop' phenomenon, Rizzi 1982). However, this explanation does not seem as valid for third-person uses, since there are ordinarily many more third-person referents in any situation than there are speech participants, so that the verbal inflection does very little to index which third-person referent is meant. It is of course possible that first- and second person referents can be resolved on the basis of verbal inflection only, but even overt first and second person forms do not always suffice to resolve reference, as shown by Lerner (1996).

In this paper, we will show that in both languages, lack of overt mention is possible in the third person even in the absence of any prior mention of that entity. Further, we will consider the implications of such cases for the theory of reference.

3. Bringing physically co-present entities into focus through embodied actions

In this section, we consider data taken from two different occasions in which participants are not solely engaged in conversation but also in other concurrent activities, namely eating and drinking. We will see how speakers produce first actions, in this case assessments, about a co-present entity by using turns in which the evaluated entity is not explicitly verbally mentioned, and how the referent is made focal and contextualized solely through embodied action.

We have selected two extracts from our data that are rather similar with regard to the type of interaction and the type of construction used for noticings being done through the assessments (cf. Pomeranz 1984: 57). Both in (3) and (4) below, participants have been having dinner and at a certain point an interactant *initiates* a new activity sequence and produces a positive assessment about the food they have been having through what can be literally translated in English as ‘is good’ (*è buono* in Italian, l. 4 in (3); *onpa hyvää* in Finnish, l. 16 in (4)). As can be noted, in neither turn is there any overt subject of the clause, either noun or a pronoun; it is solely indexed by the verb conjugation in the third person singular (*on* in Finnish and *è* in Italian).² This happens even in spite of the fact that in both instances the participants producing these turns initiate a completely new activity: an assessment sequence. In other words, the objects being topicalized and evaluated in interaction are not overtly mentioned, not even through a pronoun, despite the fact that there have been no prior mentions of the entities being evaluated in the just prior talk and the evaluations are first actions.³ Due to the fact

2 It must be noted that our focus is solely on the fact that the turn is designed without an explicit reference to the entity being assessed. We are not concerned here with cases in which the assessment can be expressed with even more “minimal” forms such as an adjective or through multimodal means only.

3 These are first actions since, as discussed above, participants initiate new action sequences through the assessments: in case (3) through a disconnected interjection during a story-telling; in case (4) the action sequences starts after a long story-telling has been brought to a closure, also indicated by a very long gap (4 secs, l. 12). Moreover,

that they have not been mentioned before, the entities being assessed are not “given” or “focal”, at least if one takes into consideration *only* the talk. Despite this, as we will see, recipients of these turns have no problems in understanding what is being evaluated and noticed.

Let us consider now in more detail how this mutual understanding about what is being evaluated is achieved by participants, despite the fact that it is not overtly mentioned by a subject (NP), even a pronominal one. In the following case, Cinzia has taken an n-th serving of some cheese, and while she is putting it down on the table, Lina intervenes and produces a positive assessment of it (l. 4).

(3) [CMM:BOX98:e'_buono_eh]"

FEderica	Lina
REmo	CInzia

1



Fr. 1 – Lina looking at Cinzia

2



Fr. 2 – Cinzia starts movement of putting down cheese, Pre-stroke movement by Lina

Fr. 3 – Lina points at the cheese – Stroke

Fr. 4 – Lina points at the cheese – starts moving hand down – Post-stroke

the new referents that are being introduced in the talk and topicalized are new in different respects, beyond their being simply topically disjuncted from the current or previous talk. First, even though participants might have talked about them earlier on in the conversation, at this point they are not the explicit foci of the talk. Second, the fact that participants are (or have been) eating the food being assessed is not per se relevant by itself: i.e. it is not that every time somebody takes some food, for instance, another participant will assess it. Rather, the item is *made relevant* and *focalised* then and there only when the assessment is produced together with or without embodied actions.

3



Fr. 5- Lina lowers hand on cheese

{FR4 {FR 5

- 4 LI: {è {buono eh::? = ((to Ci.))
 be.3SG good PTC
 it's good isn't it/uh

- 5 CI: 3 quick but not complete nods

As noted, the assessment produced in line 4 (*è buono eh::?* ‘ø -is good uh’) is formed only by a copula (*è* ‘be.3SG’) and the adjective in the masculine singular form (*buon-o*) which restricts the referent to a series of different available entities coded with masculine forms (*formaggi-o*, cheese or *grana padan-o*, the specific name of that cheese; *cotechin-o*, the specific type of meat they have been eating; *purè*, masculine, potato mash). In spite of the form of the adjective, which indicates that some entity in the masculine form is being evaluated, it must be noted that the subject of the utterance is not verbally expressed (not even through a pronoun). This construction is typical of Italian (and other languages) in which the subject of the verb does not need to be expressed through a NP or a pronoun, presumably because it is already indicated by the verb conjugation. According to many linguists, such constructions are used when the subject can be retrieved from the speech context (pro-drop phenomenon, cf. Rizzi 1982).⁴ However, in this specific case, this is not just a first action but also a disconnected interjection (i.e. a turn which is not topically and sequentially connected to the previous and concurrent sequence) taking place during the delivery of a long storytelling by Federica (data not shown, Monzoni 2005), in which Cinzia is the main addressed recipient (see also frames

4 Interestingly, it should also be noted in this specific case, in which the subject of the verb is in 3rd person singular and refers to an object, the pronoun for nonhuman referents (*esso*, masculine, *essa*, feminine) in Italian is not used any longer in conversation, as noted above. In rare cases demonstrative pronouns might be used instead (Renzi 1988: 536). Such an indexical is close to what the pointing is doing here.

2 and 3, in which Federica is looking at Cinzia while still talking). Thus, this assessment is also disconnected topically and sequentially, as well as in terms of the participation framework, from the concurrent conversational activity (Monzoni 2005), so that the subject of the clause cannot be retrieved in any way from the actual speech-, conversational and sequential context. Nonetheless, Cinzia immediately responds to Lina through three quick nods, thereby displaying her understanding of the previous turn (line 5).

The evaluated object is contextualized by the embodied activities being done by participants both during the delivery of the assessment and before its onset. At the beginning of the turn, Lina in fact points at the cheese: therefore, the embodied action is more than sufficient to contextualize and make explicit the evaluated object, even though it is not expressed through a verbal mention (cf. Kendon 2004: 160). The stroke of the pointing gesture occurs just before the actual onset of the turn, in close synchrony with Cinzia's action of putting down the cheese (see Frames 2–4). Thus the pointing gesture is not only referential (cf. Haviland 1993: 27, Kendon 2004: 160), in the sense that it indicates what entity Lina is directing her recipient to focus on (and to which she could potentially be referring to through a demonstrative pronoun as *quello* 'that', for instance) but it is also used, so to say, instead of the subject itself. We might note that it comes temporally exactly in the place where an overt subject would be placed. In other words, we could say that in addition to being referential, the embodied action stands for the subject of the clause.

The referential pointing, however, is not the only embodied action that is being used by Lina. Since the very beginning of Cinzia's activity of taking the cheese, Lina had been closely monitoring her through continuous fixed gaze, through which she has been overtly showing a first focalization of her prospective recipient's actions (Frame 1). This embodied focalisation process of Lina towards Cinzia's activities is not by itself consequential for the assessment being produced: i.e. this does not mean that any time participants looked at others through fixed gaze, they will then produce an assessment. However, let it suffice to say here that the referential pointing and the verbal assessment are not produced out of the blue, but they occur after a quite long spate of interaction during which Lina has displayed of having noticed something in Cinzia's activities (cf. Monzoni, ms.). In fact, the assessment is not just an evaluative activity but also a noticing, since it is done as a first action.

So far then, we have seen that these first assessments in which the referent is not verbally mentioned are fully understood by recipients.

In the first case we have considered, we have seen how these turns are not just contextualized by the concurrent (non-verbal) activities participants are engaged in, but also by embodied referential activities such as pointing (occurring just before the assessment) and, more importantly, also by other embodied actions occurring much earlier in the sequence which already indicate an ongoing focalisation process.

While pointing is an embodied resource through which an element in the physical context is being focalised, we have also found cases in which embodied resources are less obviously linked to this focalisation process. The following extract in Finnish is a case in point. The excerpt is taken from an occasion in which the interactants have been having dinner at Antti and Kerttu's home. At this very moment, the participants have been eating broccoli quiche. After a stretch of talk during which they have been talking about hair (see lines 1–6) and after a long gap (4.0 seconds, l. 12), Eeva produces the positive assessment (l. 15 >*onpa hyvää*<), consisting of the third person singular present tense form of the copula, *on*, the emphatic clitic *-pa*, and the assessment term, the partitive singular form of the adjective *hyvä* 'good'.

(4) [SG346 *Koho_Onpa hyvää*]

Eeva	Antti
KErttu	SAnna

Before this, Eeva has been telling a story about her mother's hairstyle

1 An: mä leikkasi vuoden ite hiuksiani
 1SG cut-PST year-GEN self hair-PL-PRT-1SGPOSS
 I cut my own hair for a year.

2 (0.6) *Eeva licking her fingers*



{Fr. 1 – *Eeva licking her fingers*

4 Ke: {o/ho
PTC
Wow

5



{Fr. 2 – Eeva licking her fingers

6 An: {ku mä oli int> int(h)is ja [(---)
PTC 1SG be-PST int int-INE and
when/because I was in the service and

7 Ke: [nii mhh
PTC
yeah

8 Ee: [mhh

9 Sa: £joo£
PTC
yeah

10 {Eeva self-grooms

11 Ke: {*nii joo*
PTC PTC
yeah, Ok.

12 (4.0) all are eating (Fr.3–5)

13



Eeva self-grooms –
Fr. 3

Sanna touches
her mouth while
eating – Fr. 4

Eeva takes her glass
from the table – Fr. 5

14



Fr. 6



Eeva and Sanna looking at each other – Fr. 7

15

{*Fr. 6*

{*Fr. 7*

16 Ee:

{>**onpa**
be.3SG.PRS-CLT
(this) is good

{[**hyvää**<
good-PRT

17 Ke:

[(--)

18

Eeva takes a sip from her glass

19

{Sanna looking down

20 San:

{on
be.3SG.PRS
(yes it) is.

21

(0.7)

22 Sa:

[aika sellast niinku, ((looks down at the food))
quite DEM3-ADJ-PRT like
kind of like,

23 An:

[*mä ha> mä haluun* päärynää
1SG wa- 1SG want-1SG pear-PRT
I'd like some/a pear.

24 Sa:

mites sitä nyt kuvailis (to Eeva?)
how-CLT DEM3-PRT PTC describe-COND
how should one/I describe it

25

(0.6)

26

{ *Ke. touches quiche with server*

27 Ke: {tää parsakaali on ihan tosi hyvää=
 DEM1 broccoli be.3SG quite really good
 this broccoli is really quite good.

28 sa: =mehevää
 juicy-PRT
 juicy

29 Ee: mm-m
 PRT

30 ke: nii o
 PTC be.3SG
 It really is.

Unlike the previous case, in which the assessor intervenes with a disconnected interjection during the extended storytelling by another participant, here the assessment occurs after the end of a narrative. After Eeva's story about her mother's simple hairstyle (data not shown) and the subsequent comment by Antti about having cut his hair himself, this topic dies out with minimal uptake by his recipients (l. 1–11) and a long four-second gap ensues (l. 12), indicating the end of this sequence. During the gap, the participants are still eating and are disengaged from each other (see frames 3–5). It is at this point that Eeva initiates a new sequence through the positive assessment (l. 16, *onpa hyvää*).

Differently from the previous case, there is an earlier verbal mention of what is being evaluated; however, the mention occurs nearly three minutes prior (2.44 minutes, to be exact). This mention is made as Kerttu brings a quiche to the table and offers it to the guests with the utterance *saanks mä tarjota piirakkaa* 'may I offer (some) quiche'. There is no verbal uptake, and after that, the discussion focuses on hair-cuts, while the participants are eating. Thus, the referent can no longer be focal at this point. More importantly, while in (3) the entity being assessed was made explicit through the pointing, here Eeva does *not* use any (additional) embodied action which might be referential and which might more clearly indicate which entity she is currently assessing. Based on the third person verb form only, she could be assessing any (singular) entity present in the physical context. However, she uses the partitive form of the adjective (*hyvä-ä* 'good-PRT'), indicating that the

entity being evaluated is divisible, which may contribute to its semantic construal. Despite the fact that the grammatical resources available in Finnish thus do serve to restrict the potential entities which can be assessed in this case, and that Eeva's assessment can be contextualized by the activity the participants have been engaged in (i.e. having dinner), potentially Eeva could be referring to a number of different divisible entities: the quiche (the main dish they have been eating), some bread (Eeva holds it in her hand at this very moment) or the liquid she is going to have. Despite this, as already noted, and similarly to (3), her assessment is immediately responded to and aligned with by using a simple verb repeat (Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009: 127–133) by Sanna, thereby displaying understanding not just of the utterance but also of the referent which is being assessed; if she did not know what was being assessed, she might not agree with the assessment so readily. Hence, in a multi-activity context the co-shared activity the participants have been engaged in (eating the quiche) is more than sufficient to contextualize the actual assessment and the new referent, which nevertheless could not be said to have “given” or “focal” status in the talk at this point, without even the need to use embodied action to indicate the object which might be coded as the subject of the verbal utterance, such as the case of referential pointing we have considered before. Moreover, it should be noted that, similarly to the previous instance, also the recipient does not make the referent explicit at this point. However, in line 24 the quiche receives a pronominal mention indexing it as a given and thus shared referent at this point.

When discussing excerpt (3), we have noted how the embodied action occurring before the assessment could also be relevant to the production of the turn and how these actions do not just start at the very moment in which the utterances are produced but are anticipated by some preparatory phase(s). The same can be said about (4). During the sequence in lines 1–11, all the participants are still eating. Eeva first licks her fingers (lines 2–6, see frames 1–2). This action might be accidental, but it might potentially be a first display of the appreciation the food she has been having. This action can also be an indication of withdrawing from active participation in the current framework. She subsequently produces a rather minimal acknowledgement token in response to Antti's turn, l. 8. Slightly after this acknowledgement, she starts self-grooming (l. 10), indicating the actual shift from an active participation to more self-centred/-focused activities which in fact continue during the gap (see fr. 3). During the gap, Sanna, who is sitting across from Eeva, is still eating and touches her mouth (fr. 4). At this point, Eeva first

takes a glass from the table, ceases the movement of lifting the glass, and then, holding the glass halfway to her mouth, produces the assessment and in the last part of the turn (l. 16, frame 7), she looks at Sanna, thereby explicitly addressing the assessment to her. Hence, similarly to the previous case, the shift from an activity to a new one is not abrupt, despite the fact that in this specific instance, the previous sequence had come to a halt. Nevertheless, one can notice a preparation phase during which embodied actions are performed before the actual production of a new turn initiating a completely new sequence. However, while in (3) the fixed gazing at the recipient's activities and the subsequent pointing were uniquely related to (and targeting) the referent being assessed, in (4) we can distinguish between different kinds of activities. First, some of the activities seem to be more related to shifts in participation: i.e. from an active participation to a more passive and self-centered one (namely, the self-grooming and also taking the glass). These can also constitute a transition from the prior sequence to the next one. Second, some other activities such as the action of still chewing the food by Eeva as well as by the others seem to be enough to contextualize the referent. Third, in both cases these assessments through which speakers do noticings are not accidental and inadvertent in terms of timing. As noted in (3), they are placed at exact points in the flow of activities also by recipients. In (3) the assessment, together with the pointing, is synchronous with the action by the prospective recipient to put down the assessed referent. Similarly, in (4) Eeva produces her evaluation in close synchrony with her prospective recipient's action of touching her mouth with her fingers. This activity might, but need not, constitute an appreciation of the food or might be simply a 'self-attentive move' (as a gesture to clean her mouth, for instance). In either case, Eeva could be seen to link/relate her assessment to this gesture of Sanna in an opportunistic way.

In this section, we have shown that referents assessed in conversation do not need to be mentioned verbally at all when they are being assessed, even though there is no prior mention of that referent in the conversation. This shows that entities can be made focal through embodied means only. Such embodied means can involve gestures such as pointing, but need not. We have also shown that verbal assessment activities are finely coordinated with and embedded into what else is going on in the conversation on the verbal and non-verbal level.

In the next section, we will discuss matters having to do with the theories of reference raised by our findings.

4. Discussion

We have shown above that entities which have not been previously mentioned in the conversation, and thus have not been made focal through linguistic means, can be assessed in conversation even though there is no overt verbal mention of that referent. We have further shown that a referent can be made focal merely through multimodal means such as pointing, as in example (3), and, even more strikingly, in the absence of other means, it can become focal through an activity all the participants are engaged in, as in example (4), where the food being eaten is assessed.

In our view, these kinds of usages raise profound questions about the nature of reference. One question has to do with timing. When an entity is being assessed without any overt mention of it, at which point does it become a referent? At the exact moment it is being pointed at, or during the extended period of preparatory activities such as the gazing at the cheese in (3), or, in cases like (4), when the evaluation is verbalized, or perhaps when the activity which contextualizes the evaluated entity has begun, such as the eating of the quiche in (4)? Further, what would ‘being a referent’ mean in these kinds of contexts? The existing research on reference is so tightly bound with the issue of verbal mentions that even the literature concerning embodied indexing tends to only discuss cases where, for example, pointing is accompanied by overt mentions (e.g. Clark 2003). While some researchers also consider uses where only embodied means are used, and are careful to note the complexity of gestural indexing, noting that ‘referential’ gestures do much more than simply referring (e.g. Haviland 1993, Goodwin 2003, Engberg-Pedersen 2003), the cases discussed tend to be situations where verbal means are, for one reason or another, not available, or if they are, the referentiality of the gesture is taken for granted; the gesture is seen as creating reference or even substituting for a verbal mention. Admittedly, we have taken the same approach here. However, even for languages where the use of verbal forms for referring is not the usual choice, the terms ‘pro drop’, ‘ellipsis’, or ‘zero anaphora’ are often used to discuss the more common cases where no verbal form is used (for a critical discussion of such terminology based on Japanese, which is such a language, see Ono and Thompson 1997). This terminology is unfortunate, since it takes the presence of overt verbal mentions as the default case. We think our data show that even in the absence of prior mentions, overt forms are not the only option, even in languages such as Finnish which commonly uses pronominals with person-marked verbs.

We suggest that we have come to a point where we need to seriously reconsider the contribution of embodied means to verbal action and to reference, and the questions that arise from such considerations. When we seriously examine multimodal data, we will no doubt find cases where there is only a gesture such as a point which functions to draw the attention of the recipient to something in the environment. When there is no accompanying verbalization, such as the assessment here, would we consider that reference? What would be the evidence? We do not have ready answers at this point, but merely wish to raise the issue here.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown that entities which are not currently focal in conversation can be made focal and subsequently evaluated without any verbal mention of the entity being discussed. In this paper, we have focused on cases where entities present in the conversation are verbally assessed, but we suspect and in fact have some evidence that assessment activities and noticings are not the only ones in which a previously unmentioned referent can be brought into discussion through embodied means.

We have also shown that the noticing and assessment activity which occurs in these examples is finely calibrated with other verbal and non-verbal activities. Participants in conversation do not use embodied means out of the blue, but they integrate them into the ongoing conversational activity in finely timed coordination with what other concurrent activities are going on in the interaction.

Finally, we have raised certain questions regarding referentiality and referring which our data have made relevant. While we do not present any ready answers to these questions, we think the analysis of multimodal means to focus attention on entities in conversation begs for resolution of these questions.

Addresses:

Chiara M. Monzoni
 Dept. of Finnish, Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian Studies
 Helsingin yliopisto
 PL 3, Fabianinkatu 33, 00014 Helsinki
 Finland

E-mail: chiaramonzoni@yahoo.it

Ritva Laury
Dept. of Finnish, Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian Studies
Helsingin yliopisto
PL 3, Fabianinkatu 33, 00014 Helsinki
Finland
E-mail: ritva.laury@helsinki.fi

Abbreviations

In the glossings appear the following abbreviations not included in Leipzig glossing rules: CLT – clitic, INE – inessive, PERS – personal, PPLE – past participle, PRT – partitive, PTC – particle, TEMP – temporal.

References

- Chafe, Wallace (1994) *Discourse, consciousness and time: the flow and displacement of conscious experience in speaking and writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Clark, Herbert H. (2003) “Pointing and placing”. In Sotaro Kita, ed. *Pointing: where language, culture and cognition meet*, 243–268. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cornish, Francis (1996) “Antecedentless anaphora: deixis, anaphora, or what? Some evidence from English and French”. *Journal of Linguistics* 32, 1, 19–41.
- Cornish, Francis (1999) *Anaphora, Discourse and Understanding: evidence from English and French*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Engberg Pedersen, Elizabeth (2003) “From pointing to reference and predication: pointing signs, eyegaze, and head and body orientation in Danish Sign Language”. In Sotaro Kita, ed. *Pointing: where language, culture and cognition meet*, 269–292. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Fasulo, Alessandra and Chiara Monzoni (2009) “Assessing mutable objects: a multimodal analysis” *Research on language and social interaction* 42, 4, 362–378.
- Golato, Andrea (2005) *Compliments and compliment responses: grammatical structure and sequential organization*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Goodwin, Charles (2003) “Pointing as a situated practice”. In Sotaro Kita, ed. *Pointing: where language, culture and cognition meet*, 217–241. Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum.
- Goodwin, Charles and Marjorie Harness-Goodwin (1987) “Concurrent operations on talk: notes on the interactive organization of assessments” *Pragmatics* 1, 1–54.
- Gundel, Jeanette (2010) “Reference and accessibility from a Givenness Hierarchy Perspective”. *International Review of Pragmatics* 2, 148–168.
- Gundel, Jeanette, Nancy Hedberg, and Ron Zacharski (1993) “Cognitive status and the form of referring expressions in discourse”. *Language* 69, 274–307.

- Hakulinen, Auli, Maria Vilkuna, Riitta Korhonen, Vesa Koivisto, Tarja Riitta Heinonen, and Irja Alho (2003) *Iso suomen kielioppi*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Haviland, John (1993) "Anchoring, iconicity and orientation in Guugy Yimithirr pointing gestures". *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 3, 1, 3–45.
- Hakulinen, Auli and Marja-Leena Sorjonen (2009) "Designing utterances for action: verb repeat responses to assessments". In Markku Haakana, Minna Laakso, and Jan Lindström, eds. *Talk in interaction. comparative dimensions*, 124–151. (Studia Fennica Linguistica.) Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Helasvuo, Marja-Liisa (2014) "Agreement or crystallization? Patterns of 1st and 2nd person subjects and verbs of cognition in Finnish conversational interaction". *Journal of Pragmatics* 63, 63–78.
- Kendon, Adam (2004) *Gesture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laitinen, Lea (1995) "Nollapersoonaa". *Virittäjä* 99, 337–358.
- Laury, Ritva (1994) "Ensimmäinnän pronomineista puhutussa suomessa". *Virittäjä* 98, 3, 162–181.
- Laury, Ritva (2005) "First and only: single-mention pronouns in spoken Finnish". In Ritva Laury, ed. *Minimal reference: the use of pronouns in Finnish and Estonian*, 56–74. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Lerner, Gene H. (1996) "On the place of linguistic resources in the organization of talk-in-interaction: 'second person' reference in multi-party conversation". *Pragmatics* 6, 281–294.
- Lindström, Anna and Lorenza Mondada (2009) "Assessments in social interaction: introduction to the special issue". *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 42, 4, 299–308.
- Mondada, Lorenza (2009) "The embodied and negotiated production of assessments in instructed actions". *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 42, 4, 329–361.
- Monzoni, Chiara M. MS. "Embodied actions as a constitutive modality in initiating noticings through evaluations". Manuscript. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Monzoni, Chiara M. (2005) "The use of syntactic marked constructions in Italian multi-party Conversation". In Auli Hakulinen and Margret Selting, eds. *Syntax & lexis in conversation*, 131–159. (Studies in Discourse and Grammar). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Ogden, Richard (2006) Phonetics and social action in agreements and disagreements. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38, 1752–1775.
- Ono, Tsuyoshi and Sandra A. Thompson (1997) "Deconstructing 'zero anaphora'". *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 23, 481–491.
- Pomeranz, Anita (1984) "Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn-shape." In J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage, eds. *Structures of social action*, 57–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Renzi, Lorenzo (1988) *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione*. Vol. 1. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Rizzi, Luigi (1982) *Issues in Italian syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1996) "Some practices for referring to persons in talk-in-interaction: a partial sketch of a systematics". In Barbara Fox, ed. *Studies in anaphora*, 437–485. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Kokkuvõte. Chiara M. Monzoni ja Ritva Laury: Referentide ligipääsetavaks muutmine mitmepoolses suhtluses. Artikkel käsitleb juhtumeid, mil eelnevalt nimetamata referente hinnatakse ilma neile otseselt viitamata. Referendid muudetakse ligipääsetavaks multimodaalsete vahenditega, mis on kooskõlas kõige ülejäänuga, mis vestluses toimub. Autorid leiavad, et vaadeldavad juhtumid tõstatavad olulisi küsimusi viitamise ja referentsiaalsuse kohta. Materjaliks on mitme inimese vestlused itaalia ja soome keeles.

Märksõnad: multimodaalsus, mitme inimese vestlus, viitamine, ligipääsetavus, soome keel, itaalia keel