

**Tsuyoshi Ono, Ritva Laury
and Ryoko Suzuki (eds.)**

**Usage-based and
Typological Approaches
to Linguistic Units**

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Usage-based and Typological Approaches to Linguistic Units

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Usage-based and Typological Approaches to Linguistic Units
Edited by Tsuyoshi Ono, Ritva Laury and Ryoko Suzuki

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Usage-based and Typological Approaches to Linguistic Units

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On the notion of unit in the study of human languages

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1. Introduction

In the following sections, we will raise several global issues having to do with the notion of the linguistic unit, the theme of the current volume. Our intention here is to help the reader understand the discussion given in these data-heavy papers in the larger context of theorizing the nature of human language in general. Our theoretical discussion will be followed by summaries of these contributions at the end of the article.

1.1 The notion of unit in linguistics

The following definition from a well-respected dictionary of terms in the field of linguistics more or less represents the traditional understanding of the notion of unit:

unit – In a general, pre-theoretical sense, this term is often used in linguistics and phonetics to refer to any entity which constitutes the focus of an enquiry. ... The unit is the stretch of language that carries grammatical patterns, and within which grammatical choices are made. For example, the unit sentence consists of one or more instances of the unit clause, and so on. (Crystal 2008: 503)

The linguistic unit is structurally defined here as a container ‘carrying’ grammatical patterns. This is consonant with, and perhaps has influenced or is influenced by, the traditional view that language, particularly syntax, is made of fully parsable and hierarchically organized parts.

Because of the dominance of this particular view of language and its seeming simplicity, this understanding of the notion of unit has typically been taken for granted and given a more or less pre-theoretical (as the above definition states) and thus unchallenged status. This is manifested in the discussion of directly relevant topics (e.g., the discussion of the unit clause) and also embedded in less

relevant discussion, practically in all disciplines, fields, and areas dealing with language including any type of syntax, typology, historical linguistics, computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, Conversation Analysis, language teaching, and so on.

In this article, we would like to take issue with this notion as it is currently understood because, as we will demonstrate, and as is further supported by other contributions in this volume, it misrepresents the nature of the language of everyday talk, the primary form of language (see, e.g., Fillmore 1974; Schegloff 1996; Linell 2005).

1.2 Unit in individual languages

Characterizing linguistic structure in terms of units understood as described above dominates studies of individual languages. Steps typically taken to approach linguistic structure are to define structural units (e.g., clause) a priori and then search for their manifestations in the language in question. The main problem with such an approach is that those structural units (and thus their definitions) originate from the study of socially dominant languages such as Indo-European languages, especially English, but they have tended to be assumed as universals.

Obviously this is problematic partly because the social dominance of particular languages should not privilege their structural properties as general properties of human languages. It is also problematic because those structural properties mostly derive from the study of examples constructed by researchers themselves, which thus might not reflect the language of actual speech, the most fundamental form of language. For these reasons, we are justified to ask whether such properties are actually relevant to languages that one might happen to be studying. That is, are structural properties primarily based on constructed examples of socially dominant language(s) real/useful for actual speech data of other languages?

In fact, since the 1990s, studies based on conversation data have demonstrated the problematic nature of traditional linguistic units in accounting for the grammar of individual languages (Englebretson 2003, 2008; Miller 1995; Miller & Weinert 1998; Thompson 2002; Ono & Jones 2008; Ono & Thompson 1995, 2009; Tao 2003). Some of these studies have even shown that structural properties, including units which are familiar to linguists and assumed to be found in all languages, are clearly not universal, for example in the case of syntactic subject (e.g., ergative languages), clausal complementation (in colloquial Indonesian, Englebretson 2003), clause combinations (in Finnish and Japanese, Laury & Ono 2014), and passives (in Newari, Abraham & Kulikov 1999).

This further suggests that we might even be justified to ask whether particular linguistic properties we choose to focus on in analyzing particular languages are in fact an outcome of a very common tendency in our tradition of looking for language universals prematurely based on the observation of small numbers of languages.¹

1.3 Cross-linguistic perspective and functional motivation

For the reasons just discussed, it is interesting to find recent typologically oriented research which also questions the universality of some linguistic units and categories (e.g., Dryer 1997; Croft 2001; Englebretson 2003). This is perhaps because, due to the nature of their research, these linguists have had the opportunity to closely observe a variety of structural patterns presented by the world's languages, and have gained a better grasp of how different languages can be.

Regarding the common tendency for positing cross-linguistic structures, it has been suggested that if categories in different languages resemble each other, it may be because they share functions; the similarity we observe is likely to be a result from form-meaning isomorphy, not from universality of given structural categories:

The temptation that has led linguists in the past to posit structure in a cross-linguistic sense is driven precisely by the high degree of similarity among structures in different languages, a degree of similarity that leads to using the same labels for similar structures in different languages and eventually to the replication of these labels as labels for some unified crosslinguistic phenomenon. But, once we recognize that the similarities that lead to these labels are themselves simply the reflection of high degrees of isomorphism between different structures and a given function, then the need for positing crosslinguistic structures should evaporate. (Dryer 1997: 137)²

This is an extremely interesting proposal partly because it attempts to motivate structural universals and clearly merits further work.

Even more radically, there has been a suggestion that linguistic categories studied by linguists, called 'crosslinguistic categories' and used for comparative purposes, may not be and need not be real to speakers, or for particular languages at all (Haspelmath 2010: 665, 2018; see also Dryer 1997). According to

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1. Looking for language universals is a long-standing preoccupation in linguistics, which can end up misrepresenting individual languages which do not fit the patterns portrayed as common (or even universal) by linguists.
 2. But we may even ask if and how functions can be assumed to be similar. There is clearly a need to establish methods to establish functional equivalence for such endeavors to proceed.

Haspelmath, there are two kinds of categories: comparative concepts (not real for speakers, but used for linguists for the purpose of comparison) and descriptive categories (ones particular to individual languages), and the two do not match. Haspelmath suggests that 'clause' is a comparative concept and, as for other such concepts, its manifestations and defining criteria may vary greatly in different languages (Haspelmath 2010: 697). This perspective seems to be compatible with what Ewing, as well as Laury, Ono, and Suzuki, and Thompson (present volume) suggest for approaching clause-like examples from various languages.

1.4 Units and criteria to identify them in interactional linguistics

As in practically all areas dealing with language, the traditional notion of units seems to have been adopted by interactional linguists (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018) without much scrutiny. There are, however, notable exceptions; see especially Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005 and Ford, Fox & Thompson 2013. These researchers have tried to identify linguistic units such as the clause based on the behavior of participants in conversation, using a criterion which they term 'participant orientation'. This criterion is a direct inheritance from Conversation Analysis (see, for example, Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 702–703, Szczepek-Reed & Raymond 2013) where 'participant orientation' has been used to identify concepts such as the Turn Constructional Unit, second pair part and locally initial reference formulation. Fox et al. (2013: 738) suggest that there is extensive evidence concerning participant orientation to linguistic categories and forms; however, they note that such categories may not resemble any *a priori* categories familiar to linguists.

In our view, 'participant orientation' is, in fact, a problematic notion and needs to be fully examined before we can begin employing it in studying units in linguistics. Here we would simply like to touch on its several interconnected problems. First of all, 'orientation' itself needs to be defined. Our constant question in seeing the term employed by researchers is just what is meant by orientation. The term is not defined or explained in any of the work we have examined. As far as we can tell, it is simply a pre-theoretical notion which feels commonsensical and is for this reason actively deployed by scholars. Obviously, we need to be provided with methods to specify when speakers and other participants show orientation, and what they actually do to show orientation. That is, we need to know how to identify orientation. One problem we have encountered in trying to determine what exactly is meant by participant orientation and how it is manifested is the methodological stance of conversation analysts to abstain from defining central concepts (see, e.g., Hutchby & Wooffitt 2008: 49–50); instead, in an effort to use

only categories relevant to speakers, analysts are instructed to rely on what participants orient to. Obviously, there is a problem of circularity inherent here.

Similarly, we are not sure that the concepts used by linguists, such as the clause, are any more or less accessible to participants in conversation than the concepts used in Conversation Analysis (e.g., the Turn Constructional Unit). We would especially like to note the fact that these concepts must be specifically taught to future analysts, and may even be problematic for trained practitioners of linguistics and CA in analyzing actual data.

More fundamentally, we might ask whether participant orientation is even a useful criterion to identify linguistic units. How do we know that speakers orient to linguistic structure? Participants could in fact be orienting to aspects other than structure, such as semantics/pragmatics, and bodily and social actions which might be closely connected to structure. We suggest this in particular because structure presumably is not their main purpose of talking. And even if speakers orient to linguistic structure, do we know whether and how they systematically exhibit their orientation so that we can rely on it as a useful criterion? That is, it is possible that the connection between linguistic structure and participant orientation is not direct, so that using the presence and lack of participant orientation as evidence to either identify or discount linguistic categories and units seems premature.

In this context, it is quite interesting that a recent paper by Ford, Fox & Thompson (2013) has suggested that linguistic categories may not be relevant for participant orientation. We find this view extremely refreshing as it comes from accomplished figures in the field. The field of linguistics, which values scientific endeavor, yet only recently started examining its primary data, actual talk, certainly appreciates this type of critical thinking and needs to keep challenging established boundaries set mostly by studies of constructed examples of a few limited languages which are chosen because of their political dominance.

2. Short summary of papers

Ross Krekoski's contribution is a theoretically ambitious paper that questions the assumption that linguistic and interactional units are products or outputs of a formal, rule-based system. Krekoski argues that units in language and interaction are instead emergent and contingent products of the process of interaction and suggests that rule-based systems are not able to account for all actual utterances that speakers produce. The paper first offers an account of the historical developments in the study of social action, then draws parallels between ethnomethodological,

non-rule-based accounts and similar developments in mathematical logic and philosophy of mind, and then provides actual examples illuminating the issue.

Ritva Laury, Tsuyoshi Ono, and Ryoko Suzuki challenge the universal status given to the syntactic unit 'clause' by examining Finnish and Japanese, two languages which are genetically and typologically distinct from each other and from languages like English, where the unit 'clause' originated from. Based on a review of traditional grammars and the study of conversational data from the two languages, Laury et al. show that in encoding a predication, the structural fit between the unit 'clause' and the structures most commonly used in the two languages varies quite extensively in that the fit is close in Finnish but not so in Japanese, which suggests that 'clause' may not be grammaticized for all languages, at least not to the same degree.

Sandra Thompson's paper revisits the taken-for-granted notion of 'clause' and investigates to what degree it is real as a unit in on-going talk for the speakers of English and Japanese. She redefines the concept of 'clause' as a predicate plus (non-)core arguments routinely expressed in a language. Drawing examples from video-recorded conversational data of those languages, Thompson demonstrates that 'clauses', thus redefined, indeed function as the major 'social action formats' for initiating actions, such as directives, request for information, and so forth: this is the case not only in English where 'clauses' are considered to be well-grammaticized, but also in Japanese, where 'clauses' appear to be grammaticized to a lesser degree.

The focus of Marja-Liisa Helasvuo's paper is the free NP as a unit in Finnish conversation. She first introduces the morphosyntactic features of Finnish free NPs, showing that the majority of them are in the nominative case. Helasvuo then shows that speakers of Finnish use free NPs as independent units for a variety of interactional functions, the most common of which are assessing, characterizing and categorizing. She also shows that the free NPs in her data manifest clear prosodic boundaries, helping them to stand out as independent units.

In striking similarity to what Laury et al. and Thompson find with Japanese, Michael Ewing makes the claim that the predicate, rather than the clause, functions as the locus of grammar and interaction in colloquial Indonesian. While grammatical descriptions of Indonesian have taken the standard language and the clause as a starting point and rely on ellipsis to explain those utterances which consist only of the predicate without overt arguments, Ewing argues that predicate-only utterances are basic, and that clausal utterances emerge in conversation through interaction. Ewing first presents the different predicate formats found in Indonesian conversation, and then shows, through frequency data, that the formats which occur without overt arguments are by far the most common.

He then shows that it is predicates, rather than clauses, that participants in Indonesian conversation orient to.

Finally, Patricia Mayes and Hongyin Tao question traditional approaches to linguistic units focusing on structure and referential meanings in isolation, and propose a new perspective that focuses on coordination of multiple semiotic resources of the body and language. They take ‘categorizing’ activity in Mandarin and English as an example and present multi-faceted analysis, including linguistic (NP, predicates), sequential, bodily, and contextual aspects. The recurrent nature of categorizing activities is shown, involving more concrete physical entities to less concrete conceptual entities to even hypothetical types, which contributes substantially to our understanding of the meaning of such activity in context.

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Understanding ‘clause’ as an emergent ‘unit’ in everyday conversation

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Linguists generally assume ‘clause’ to be a basic unit for the analysis of grammatical structure. Data from natural conversations, however, suggests that ‘clause’ may not be grammaticized to the same extent across languages. Understanding ‘clause’ as a predicate (plus any arguments, inferred or expressed), we can show that participants do indeed organize their talk around ‘clauses’. I argue that English-speaking participants in everyday interaction do indeed orient to clausal units as so defined, by building their turns around predicates, and that these turns do key interactional work. The data further reveal that these units must be understood as emergent structures, recurrent patterns in a given language that emerge from humans pursuing their ordinary interactional business of communicating information, needs, identities, attitudes, and desires.

Keywords: clause, Japanese, English, conversation, unit, social action, predicate

1. Introduction

Linguists generally assume ‘clause’ to be a basic unit for the analysis of grammatical structure. While recent research has called into question the explanatory value of the notion ‘clause’ in accounting for participants’ orientations in some languages, in the current study I provide evidence that speakers of English do in fact orient to this practice in the construction of social actions in interaction, and that ‘clause’ is indeed an emergent unit in English. I argue that, for a language such as this, in which ‘clause’ is relatively highly grammaticized, clauses are a primary vehicle for implementing social actions, where I understand *social action* as “the main job of a turn”, “what the response must deal with in order to count as an adequate next turn” (Levinson 2013).

Inspired by Bybee's (2007: 6) claim that "separating language from the way it is used removes a valuable source of explanation for why language has grammar and what form that grammar takes", this paper asks:

- How do data from everyday interaction help us figure out what speakers are doing with clausal formats in a language for which 'clause' is relatively readily identifiable?
- Are clauses real for speakers of such languages, or are they just the product of a Western written tradition?
- What evidence could we bring from conversation to support 'clause' as a linguistic unit in languages of this type?

I follow Bybee (2006: 711) in viewing 'grammar' as "the cognitive organization of one's experience with language", and the patterns we call 'grammar' as derived from the way everyday interaction is organized, and how our minds categorize, store, and access our everyday interactional experiences. If grammar arises in this way from the routinization of social actions in everyday interactions (Bybee 2006, 2007, 2010; Hopper 1987, 1998, 2000), then clause structure is **emergent structure**.

Emergent structures arise out of entities 'doing their own thing' in real time (Auer 2009; Hopper 1987, 2004; Camazine et al. 2001). Examples discussed in Camazine et al. include schools of fish, rivers, sand dunes, clouds, and ant hills. No individual fish can be argued to be trying to make a 'school' with its mates; instead, schools of fish emerge as each fish pursues its own goals of finding food to eat, and not being food for another animal. In the same way, humans do not have the goal of building grammar as they go about their daily interactions. Rather, they are interacting to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, sex, and social contact and manipulation, and grammar emerges as they use and re-use language to meet these needs.

In keeping with the theme of this volume, let's now consider whether 'clauses' are 'units'. We might begin by asking what it means to call anything a 'unit'? Are schools of fish 'units'? Is a river a 'unit'? Are sand dunes, clouds, and ant hills 'units'? In my view, the notion of 'unit' is about language users' need to categorize things in their world. Rivers, sand dunes, clouds, ant hills, etc., may be **referred to** by people as if they were 'units' because people need ways of talking about the environment they encounter and interact with. By the same token, as linguists, we also need ways of talking about the phenomena we study. It is in this sense that any emergent structure can be conceived of as a 'unit' (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2013), and it is in this sense that an emergent structure such as 'clause' can be viewed as a 'unit'.

What evidence can we find in conversational language to suggest that speakers of English do orient to clauses? First, we might note that they readily recognize,

name, and orient to questions, individual turns, jokes, requests, assessments, stories, etc., which suggests that they categorize these social phenomena as 'units'. What about clauses then?

Based on recordings of everyday conversations in English, I will argue that conversational participants do indeed orient to clausal units by building their social actions around them. The data further reveal that these units can be understood as emergent structures, recurrent patterns in a given language that emerge from humans pursuing their ordinary interactional business.

This paper is situated within the research tradition that has been termed 'Usage-based Linguistics', more specifically within 'Interactional Linguistics', that area of scholarship which draws on the insights of both the Discourse-and-Grammar research tradition and Conversation Analytic research on the organization of everyday interactions (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018; Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Ford et al. 2002; Laury et al. 2013; Selting & Couper-Kuhlen 2001; Hakulinen & Selting 2005; Ochs et al. 1996; Thompson et al. 2015).

My data consist of transcribed recordings of approximately 30 hours of naturally occurring conversations in American English. All are either audio recordings of telephone calls or video recordings of face-to-face interactions.

2. Problematising 'social action'

For researchers working on language and interaction, the question of what is a social action can be highly problematic. In conversation analytic research, a considerable number of social actions have been identified and persuasively argued for, namely such actions as requesting, story-telling, complaining, offering, inviting, proposing, reenacting, informing, assessing, and information-seeking.

However, some social actions are the subject of ongoing debate and refinement in the literature (e.g., see Levinson 2013 for a thoughtful discussion; on Repair initiating actions, see Hayashi et al. 2013 and Dingemanse & Enfield 2015; on informing and asserting actions, see Thompson et al. 2015 and Vatanen 2014). Further, one frequently encounters in the data stretches of talk in which social actions are not readily identifiable. Identifying social actions in talk is a real issue, often for participants as well as for researchers. What I have chosen to do in this paper, therefore, is to limit my discussion of clauses and social actions to a set of actions which have been relatively well-identified in the conversational analytic literature, beginning with 'initiating actions', those which make relevant a next turn by an interlocutor, thereby initiating a 'sequence' (Schegloff 2007), and then considering non-initiating actions as well. What that interlocutor does next has been repeatedly and convincingly shown to provide strong evidence for what that

initiating action was taken to be doing (the ‘next-turn proof procedure’ (Sacks et al. 1974: 728–9)).

Initiating actions are important in the study of language and interaction because they are visible as routinely engaging others, allowing researchers a relatively transparent view of a coherent piece of the organization of social interaction. For interactional linguists, this can be particularly valuable, giving them a relatively small and well-delineated arena within which to study the role of grammar, that is, of prosody and morphosyntax.

In Section 4, then, I consider this set of social actions to see to what extent these are done with clauses in English. First, though, I address the issue of what is a clause.

3. Problematizing ‘clause’: ‘Clause’ as ‘predicate-plus’

Most linguistic theories and approaches to linguistic structure have taken the ‘clause’ to be a central organizing unit. In conversation analytic research as well, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson suggest that clauses and sentences are among the building blocks of Turn Constructional Units (1974: 721), and Goodwin (1979, 1981) shows how recipient responses (or lack thereof) can shape the unfolding of a clause in real time. In interactional linguistic research, which focuses on everyday spoken interaction, Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen argue that “the clause is a *locus* of interaction” (2005: 481), and Helasvuo (2001a) considers the clause a central resource in interaction.

But just what should be considered a ‘clause’, and why should it be so central to our understanding of grammar? In this paper, I will address these questions:

- How is ‘clause’ both a cognitive and a social concept?
- How might clausal structure emerge from recurrent practices of social interaction?
- To what extent can ‘clause’ be taken as a cross-linguistically valid conceptual unit?¹

Until the research underlying such recent endeavors as are represented in this volume, a search of the linguistic literature suggests that at least the first two are questions that most linguists have never asked, let alone attempted to answer.

According to Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 25), the distinction between predicating and non-predicating elements is one which “reflects [a] universal distinc-

1. See Haspelmath (2010a, b) for the distinction between ‘cross-linguistic category’ and ‘comparative concept’.

tion that every language makes”² In this paper, I adopt this distinction; I take ‘clauses’ as being built around a ‘predicate’.

Importantly, recent research suggests that ‘clause’ may not be grammaticized to the same extent across languages. For example, in English and other languages of Europe, ‘clause’ seems to be relatively well-grammaticized compared to Japanese (Laury et al. this volume, Iwasaki & Ono 2001), Indonesian (Ewing, this volume), Nuuchahnulth (Nakayama 2002), and Mandarin (Tao, 1996)). By ‘well-grammaticized’, I mean that predicates typically occur closely linked to content forms, lexical or morphological, which serve as its core or non-core arguments.

As Laury et al. (this volume) and Ewing (this volume) propose, for some languages, such as Japanese and Indonesian, the cross-linguistic comparative unit ‘clause’ can be usefully understood to include ‘predicate’.³ For example, in Nuuchahnulth, the only way to build up a complex predication is to use a combination of clauses, as illustrated in this example from Nakayama (p.c.):

- (1) qi:čiči?aλs su:tił ɥa:ɥu:pa qi:-ši(λ)=’aλ=s
 for.long-MOM=EVENT=1SG you-doing.to
 I.have.been.doing.for.long to.you
 sut-(č)it ɥa:ɥu:p-(y)a·
 teaching-DUR
 teaching
 ‘I have been teaching you for a long time.’ [GLLife.114]

- (2) hmm wawa:ʔaλqu:č ʔa:ʔa:pata
 wawa:='aλ=qu:č dupCV-ʔapat=(y)a
 say=EVENT=COND=INF.3 REP-think=REP
 he.would.say thinking
 qi:yapił.
 qi:y-api-’it
 for.long-standing.up on.the.floor
 standing.on.the.floor.for.a.long.time
 “Hmmm,” he kept saying, thinking and standing there for a long time.” [DeerJigging 069]

2. See also Hopper & Thompson (1984) for arguments that the noun-verb distinction is a cross-linguistically valid one, with verbs serving as prototypical predicates and noun serving as prototypical referent arguments.

3. Ewing (this volume) argues that what is understood as a ‘clause’ in Indo-European languages, where NP arguments are routinely expressed, could be seen as an ‘elaborated predicate’ in a language like Indonesian, where NP arguments are typically inferred. See also Du Bois (2003: 55), who suggests that the argument structure of a predicate is “nothing more than a structure of expectations triggered by a verb.”

In such languages, then, we could speak of ‘clauses’ as typically consisting entirely of predicates, that is, as being typically ‘predicate only’. Alternately, we could speak of such languages as having not grammaticized a unit ‘clause’. For other languages, clauses can be distinguished from predicates in that predicates are marked for features of their arguments such as person, number, and gender (as in Finnish (see Helasvuo 2001a) and Turkish), and/or arguments are typically expressed as pronominal or nominal arguments with the predicate (as in many familiar Indo-European languages, as well as Finno-Ugric, Altaic, and Quechuan languages). For these languages, one can speak of ‘clause’ as a linguistic unit, by which I mean a recurrent abstract pattern in language use (Bybee 2001, 2002, 2010), and consisting of a predicate plus core or non-core arguments, which are routinely expressed.⁴

Ewing (this volume) goes further, arguing persuasively that both clausehood and argument structure in conversational Indonesian are gradient, and vary according to the type of speech event the participants are engaged in. At one end of the continuum, the data reveal ‘tighter grammar’, fully articulated clauses with arguments expressed and morphological ‘ornamentation’, in more formal varieties of talk. At the other end, ‘loose grammar’, with loosely connected prosodic units often consisting of just monomorphemic predicates and no arguments, tends to occur in talk among intimates on everyday topics.

Thus, it seems that the clause as a unit is differently relevant for syntactic organization for different languages (see also Pawley 1987, 2008). I will follow Laury et al.’s lead here, then, and speak of ‘clauses’ as recognizable units of conversational organization only for those languages in which it is relatively highly grammaticized.

How, then, are we to understand ‘predicate’? As is well-known, what constitutes a ‘predicate’ varies from language to language; in some languages predicates can be ‘complex’, consisting of several elements (cf. Alsina et al. 1997; Nakayama 2002; Pawley 1998, 2008, 2009, 2011; Pawley & Lane 1998), and in many languages a ‘predicate’ can be a verbal expression or any other category, such as a nominal, a locative, or an adverbial (for examples, see Ewing (this volume)). I understand ‘predicate’ cross-linguistically, then, to be the expression of a state or event in

4. This understanding echoes that of Helasvuo (2001a: 25), who sees clauses as “emergent syntactic constructions consisting of the verb and its arguments.” It also echoes the view of Hakulinen et al. (2004: 825), who characterize the ‘clause’ in Finnish (*lause*) as having as its ‘nucleus’ the finite, person-marked verb. My understanding differs from theirs only in centering the clausal unit on ‘predicate’ rather than ‘verb’, to account for copular clauses such as *it’s out of camera range*, in which it’s the predicate, rather than the morphologically ‘verbal’ copula, with which arguments are associated.

which one or more arguments may participate.⁵ So if a state is named, then one or more arguments is understood to be in that state, as in these excerpts from our data, where the relevant arguments are shaded:

(3) Nancy: oh: my leg's asleep,

(4) Vivian: we need some more wine over he:re.

If an event is named, then one or more arguments is understood to be participating in that event, as in:

(5) Nancy: we're gonna go.

(6) Vivian: s:o we went (o.5) and picked it up from her,

For the remainder of this paper, I will argue that the 'clause' in English plays a crucial role in serving as a vehicle for social action. I follow Schegloff (1989), who, speaking in terms of English, proposes:

The natural home environment of clauses and sentences is turns-at-talk. Must we not understand the structures of grammar to be in important respects adaptations to the turn-at-talk in a conversational turn-taking system with its interactional contingencies? (p.143-144)

Or, as Levinson (p.c.) has put it more broadly, "Language structures adjust themselves to turn-taking exigencies."

In other words, as linguists, we cannot expect to understand the patterning in the way grammar works in any language unless we understand its profoundly social underpinnings and the organizational patterns of interactional encounters.

Since we know that we use language as a primary vehicle for social action, then we can ask: How do we convey our social actions to each other? Bodily-visual behavior obviously plays a major role, but grammatically, when humans carry out social actions with talk, I submit that the primary vehicle for carrying social action is the predicate, which, in languages like English, together with expressed or inferred arguments, forms a clause. I will argue that in English (and, I predict, other languages in which 'clause' is a robust grammatical unit), clauses are the primary way in which humans do social actions with talk, such actions as requesting, assessing, inviting, informing, assessing, etc.

5. Cross-linguistically, in many languages predicates generally do have arguments associated with them, but every language appears to have predicates expressing states or events with no associated arguments. Japanese and Indonesian may have a higher number of predicates for which this is the case (see discussion in, e.g., Ono & Thompson 1997, Laury et al. this volume, and Ewing this volume), but many languages have 'ambient' predicates expressing, for example, weather states such as 'it's foggy', with no associated arguments.

Those constructions which **routinely** perform such actions in a language can be seen as *social action formats* (Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Fox 2007; Kärkkäinen 2009, 2012) for that language. Since many of these formats are clausal in a language such as English, where ‘clause’ seems to matter, we interactional linguists must see social action as foundational for understanding the structure of the clause in such a language.

A prime example of a clausal social action format from English is the use of the grammatical format [PRO COPULA (intensifier) PRED-ADJ] as a recurrent vehicle for doing assessments (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987 ((7)), 1992 ((8), (9)):

- (7) Michelle: it was- it was wild.
- (8) Dianne: it was s::so goo:d.
- (9) Hyla: and it’s just r:really s:::sa:::d.

Another example of a clausal social action format is the use of ‘stand-alone’ conditional clauses to give suggestions, or make proposals (Ford 1993; Evans 2007; Laury et al. 2013; Stirling 1999), as in:

- (10) Doctor: if you’d like to move your head a little. thank you. [Stirling]

Other examples are discussed in Curl (2006), investigating linguistic formats used for making offers, such as ‘if X, (then) Y’, ‘do you want me to X’, and ‘do you want’ and in Curl and Drew (2008), where specific formats with specific positions and form are used in making requests. I will return to this type of social action below.

My data show that social action formats in English – constructions that are tied to specific sequential contexts, and that work to convey specific social actions in those contexts – indeed often take the form of clauses. But do we have evidence of the social role of clauses beyond these specific types of socio-grammatical packages? I believe we do.

4. Clauses as vehicles for social action

4.1 Directive-commissive actions

In an important contribution to the study of grammar in talk-in-interaction, Couper-Kuhlen (2014: 624) characterizes a “family of initiating actions”, namely “**Directives**, including requests, proposals and suggestions, and **Commissives**, including offers and invitations”, calling them ‘directive-commissive actions.’⁶ She

6. I am especially grateful to Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen for her work on Directive-Commissives and her valuable discussions on the data in this section. She is largely responsible for the collections referred to here, with input from Barbara A. Fox and myself.

goes on to support the claim that the formats speakers draw on to carry out these actions “are clausal in nature” (p. 637). She notes further that:

This fact is noteworthy because it stands in stark contrast to the formats attested for responses to directive-commissive actions, which like other responsive actions are, more often than not, not full clauses but rather particles, phrases and/or pro-repeats (Thompson et al. 2015). One of the hallmarks of an initiating directive-commissive action is thus that it is commonly implemented by a full clausal turn. (p. 637)

For example, in this American English interaction, Stephanie and her boyfriend are talking about moving from an apartment into a house.

- (11) 1 Stephanie: we're gonna **have a garden**=
 2 =maybe we **can grow** our own konyaku and negi.
 3 Oliver: oh god.

Stephanie's turn is carrying out the social action of proposing, that is, articulating an action “to be undertaken jointly with shared costs and benefits” (Couper-Kuhlen 2014: 628). Stephanie's proposal is done in two clauses with two predicates, marked in boldface. Both of these predicates are ‘complex predicates’ in the sense of Alsina et al. (1997). Line 1's predicate *have a garden* involves a ‘light verb’ and an ‘incorporated’ object,⁷ while that in line 2, *can grow*, consists of a [modal auxiliary + verb]. Oliver's turn in line 3 is a non-clause, a minimal response to her proposal.⁸

Couper-Kuhlen (2014) and Thompson et al. (to appear) show that proposals are generally done with clausal formats, the most frequent of which is *I/we can/could X*.

Another action in the Directive-Commissive family, which recent research has brought us much closer to understanding (see especially Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014), is the Request for action, with which a speaker either asks a recipient to perform some action that will benefit the requester or tells them to do so. Thompson et al. (2015) identify the three most frequent types of formats used in making requests in American English, all of them clausal:

- a. Imperative (both positive/affirmative and negative):
 (12) Beth: oh wait a minute.
 (13) Oliver: don't yell.

7. See Thompson & Hopper (2001) for arguments that the combination [light verb + an apparent ‘object’] forms a complex predicate in the sense of Alsina et al. (1997).

8. I note that Oliver's response, like most such minimal responses, is only interpretable in terms of the *clausal* turn that it is a response to (see Thompson et al. 2015 for discussion of the form and social functions of minimal responses). I return to the significance of this point below.

- b. Interrogative (both with and without a modal or modal-like auxiliary):⁹
- (14) Emma: would you call Dad tonight,
- (15) Beth: hey Don? could you bring out some kni:ves?
- c. Declarative (both with and without a modal or modal-like auxiliary):
- (16) Hyla: I want my book ba:::ck.
- (17) Jerry: I need a place, for my knees,

Requests for action in English conversation, then, are generally done with clauses.

Giving advice, including suggesting a future action to another, is also a Directive-Commissive action type which is normatively done with clauses. I follow Couper-Kuhlen (2014: 633) in using the term advice-giving for an action which advocates “a future action or activity to be carried out by the recipient that will benefit the recipient”.¹⁰

- (18) Lottie: why don't you get that nay- uh:: Revlon nai:l:

Emma has complained of a toe fungus, and Lottie suggests trying a product called 'Revlon Nail'. Here is another illustrative excerpt:

- (19) [Michelle has Laura's ice cream in her freezer, and Michelle has teasingly said she will throw it out.]
- Laura: no: you can't throw chocolate [ice cream out.
- Michelle: [😊 I can. 😊 =
- Donna: → (to Laura) =you better pick it up then.

Here Donna uses a social action format associated with suggestions (Couper-Kuhlen 2014: 637) *you('d) better X*, to advise Laura to retrieve her ice cream before Michelle throws it out. Couper-Kuhlen's findings strongly support my hypothesis: all 64 suggestions and offers of advice in her data are done with clauses. In our joint collection of advice-giving actions, clauses are the vehicle for 55 out of 55 instances of advice-giving. Intriguingly, Shaw and Hepburn (2013) provide striking independent support for this claim: in their study of advice-giving between English-speaking mothers and their young adult daughters, every one of the 20 forms listed in their Table of Forms of advice-giving is clausal.

9. Under 'modal' auxiliaries we include, e.g., *can, could, will, would, shall, should*; under 'modal-like' auxiliaries, e.g., *be able to, ought to, have to, had better*, and the like.

10. On advice-giving in general, see Shaw (2013), Shaw and Hepburn (2013), and Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (2019).

Offers, on the other hand, are well-known for being social actions which, in face-to-face interactions, can be done simply with the body, as discussed in Kärkkäinen and Keisanen (2012), or with the body and an utterance like *Here*.

However, in phone calls and even in much face-to-face interaction, clausal formats are far and away the most frequent way to do offers, as shown in:

(20) [Donna is a guest at Mom and Laura's house.]

- 1 Mom: would you like some m:ore water, or some hot tea, [or coffee,
[several lines later]
- 2 Mom: would you like cream or sugar, Donna?
- 3 Donna: I need both.

Mom's initial offer in line 1 and her follow-up offer in line 2 are both clausal.

(21) [Laura is pointing to a plate of cookies]

Laura: these are so wonderful, though, you have to try one.=

(22) [Pam is holding out Maureen's abandoned box of take-out Chinese rice to Maureen.]

Pam:→ >you eatin'< those?
(0.1)

Abbie: eat your [rice.

Maureen: [oh I forgot about my rice, it's nice and warm,

In a collection across a range of conversations, 40 out of 41 offers are done with clauses. Indirect support for this claim can also be found in Curl (2006), who shows how "the distribution of the different syntactic constructions used to make offers is systematically related to the interactional situation and the sequential placement of the offer." She argues that in English telephone calls, offers take one of three clausal forms depending on whether they were "made by the caller as a reason for calling, or as generated within the course of the interaction itself." Offers positioned as a reason for calling "are overwhelmingly implemented with a conditional + main clause construction of the type *If X (then) Y?*" (p.1257), as in:

(23) [Lesley calls Marsha, whose husband has recently lost his job]

[Curl's (1), p.1260]

Lesley:→ .hh an:d if: i-your husband would li:ke their adre[ss.

Marsha: [ye:[:s

Lesley: [as they're

specialists

Marsha: ye::s

(.)

Lesley:→ uhm: my husband would gladly give it to him.

Curl goes on to argue that “Offers of remedy for problems educed from previous talk are always produced with the syntactic format *Do you want me to X*” (p.1257), while offers directly responsive to talk about problems take various grammatical forms, as illustrated by:

- (24) [Emma has just said she only has some of the things she needs for the Thanks-giving dinner] [Curl’s (12), p.1271]
Barbara: can I bring down can I bring some pie:s or something?
- (25) [Nancy complains of not having anything in the house to eat, and Jo offers her some of her canned food] [Curl’s (14), p.1272]
Jo: I always have plenty of: canned goods.

Closely related to offers are invitations, which are also recurrently issued with clausal formats; in our collection of invitations, all 23 of them are formatted with clauses, as in:

- (26) Emm:→ wanna come do:wn have [a bi:t of] lu:nch with me?=
Nancy: [it’s just]
Emma: =I got some beer ‘n stu:ff,

The data show, then, that Directive-Commissive social actions strongly tend to be done with clauses in English. Indeed, Couper-Kuhlen (2014: 637) shows that the linguistic forms most often used for these actions are exclusively clausal in nature.

4.2 Assessments

Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:154) characterize assessments as “evaluating in some fashion persons and events being described” (see also Pomerantz 1984). Extracts (7)–(9) above illustrated a clause serving as a vehicle for doing assessing; Extracts (27) and (28) provide two further illustrations.

- (27) “West Virginia” (l. 897)
Mary:→ I love West Virginia.
Jason: (.) do you?
- (28) 1 Brianna: ·hhh u:m: the new dea::n of the la:w schoo:l in Minnesota
2 (0.3) is: (0.3) a Dra:ke undergra:duate (0.2) graduate.
3 (0.2)
4 Mary: re^ally:[:;
5 Brianna: [a:n:d, so is his w^i:f:e,
6 (0.6)
7 → isn’t that †neat?=
8 Mary: → =that’s really exciting.=

In (28), both Brianna's first assessment (line 7) and Mary's second assessment (line 8) are done by clauses.

To what extent are assessments in the data done with clausal formats? In a collection of 38 assessment sequences in these two environments, all but one of the first assessments, initiating actions which make a second assessment conditionally relevant, are done with clauses.¹¹

4.3 Informings

People often inform others by giving them news, making announcements, and giving reports. I will use the term 'informing' as a cover term for this set of actions. Informings are also almost uniformly done with clauses in English, as illustrated in:

(29) Nancy: → I make good lasagna.
Shane: do you?

(30) [Terry is telling about a recent visit from a nephew]
1 Terry: → and he just sent a thank-you card,
2 it was so cu[te].
3 Abbie: [oh did he::,

In a sample database of 200 informing turns, 182 are done with full clauses.

Can we find evidence for clauses as prime vehicles for doing social action in English by considering other social actions?

11. The one instance of a non-clausal first assessment in our collection is a case of a stand-alone epithet predicate, as shown in line 8:

(i) 4 Irene: =ihhh well: I have a bo:yfriend.
5 (.)
6 Dee: you're †jokin:g.
7 Irene: no:[:
8 Dee: → [dir:t ba::g,hh
9 (0.3)
10 Irene: hhhehhehheHEHEHE
11 Dee: you: sh:o[ck:]
12 Irene: [I: a:m] a dir:t ba::g.

I consider this to be a case of a fixed schema, a social action format, of the form [evaluative ADJ], with a specific falling-intonation prosodic contour, used to convey an affective stance toward the recipient. In this case, Irene clearly displays her orientation to having been teasingly classified as a member of the class of people characterizable as 'dirt bags' by her affiliative response *I am a dirt bag* in line 12.

4.4 Assertions

Vatanen (2014) has introduced an initiating action type which she calls “assertions”:

In short, assertion turns are, technically speaking, description-like declarative statements in which the speaker claims something rather generic about the world, typically also including some type of stance or attitudinal expression (evaluation) in the utterance. (p.201)

Since assertions may be evaluative, and since they may be presented as “news”, they may be difficult to analytically distinguish from assessments, on the one hand, and informings, on the other. I take the distinction among these three action types to rest on how recipients respond to each of them as initiating actions. Recipients treat **assessments** as calling for a response which offers an evaluation of the same assessable as the first assessment. Recipients treat **informings** as having been delivered by a K+ (i.e., ‘knowing’) participant who views the recipients as K- (i.e., ‘unknowing’) (Heritage 2012a, b), and their recipients display a clear orientation to this epistemic differential, e.g., by responding with a ‘change of state particle’ such as *oh* (Heritage 1984). **Assertions**, while typically done by a speaker who is K+, however, tend to be treated by their recipients in terms of their epistemic stance towards their “truth”, and seek agreement.

As expected, the data reveal instances where participants must negotiate the action ascription of these initiating actions; in this paper I continue to try to provide clear examples. Indeed, as Vatanen notes,

upon hearing an assertion, the recipient needs to decide whether the prior speaker appears to be *informing* her about the issue in question, or is *sharing* the particular bit of talk with her – sharing both the information and the stance towards the issue. Then the recipient needs to solve how to express her/his own knowledge and stance towards the issue... (p.204)

Naturally, participants’ concern with the ‘truth’ of claims done with declarative initiating actions predicts that they will be done with clauses, and that is indeed what we find.

In (31), Stacy and Abbie are trying to figure out who was the US president when some states passed laws raising the speed limit. Stacy asserts that it was in the seventies, and Abbie asserts that “it was probably Jimmy Carter”. Stacy then questions the truth of this claim with evidence that it must have been the early seventies, before Jimmy Carter was elected in 1976.

(31) Early seventies

Stacy: it was in the seventies [so:

Abbie: [it was in the seventies so it was
probably Jim[my Carter.]

Stacy: [early] seventies. no: it was before- cuz it was when the- (.) (grand
gas crunches was on or somethin,')

Excerpt (32) illustrates an assertion whose truth is very much at issue. Jennifer, talking to Bonnie and Teresa, asserts that Anthony likes 'boy-men,' the truth of which Bonnie has trouble accepting.

(32) he told me

JEN: he likes the boy-men.

(0.9)

BON: it's not what he told me

JEN: Anthony?

TER: no::.

JEN: HE'S PULLING YOUR LE:::G.=

TER: =hehh I(h)n a big way=

BON: =really:?

JEN: NO BONNIE, YOU'RE SO GULLIBLE

In an informal survey of assertions, I found that 30 out of 30 were clauses.

4.5 Requests for information

Interrogatives used as initiating actions to obtain knowledge are nearly always done with clausal formats, whether they are yes/no interrogatives or question-word interrogatives. In our sizeable collections of over 100 sequence-initiating both yes/no interrogatives or question-word interrogatives, 100% of them are done with clauses, as illustrated in:

(33) Maureen: does your mother live here in town?

Abbie: ye:s.

(34) Maureen: >where does< her sister live.

Terry: Boise Idaho.

(35) Vivian: so what did you guys do today.

Interrogatives done as vehicles for other actions, such as making offers or invitations, are occasionally done with non-clausal formats, as we will see in the next section.

Requesting information, then, is another social action recurrently done with clauses by speakers of English.

5. Social actions not done by clauses

The discussion in Section 4 provides an opening for addressing what the astute reader may be asking: what about those social actions that aren't done by clauses? I will argue that these are consistently treated by participants as interpretable in terms of a **clausal** social action in the immediately preceding environment, or "constructed *with reference to* a nearby verb or predicate" (Thompson/Couper-Kuhlen 2005: 499, fn. 6, emphasis in the original).^{12, 13}

A clear set of examples of non-clausal social actions is a range of English responsive actions, as discussed in detail in Mazeland (2013: 487) and Thompson et al. (2015). Consider this example.

- (36) Stephanie: can you see me?
 Oliver: → oh yeah!

Here, in response to Stephanie's polar interrogative, Oliver gives a type-conforming *oh yeah!* (Raymond 2003). It is uncontroversial that his turn is taken by recipients as a responsive action in terms of the prior turn (the initiating action, or the 'first pair part' in conversation analytic terms), which takes the form of a clause.

This point is also illustrated by responses to question-word interrogatives, whose form is symbiotic with that of the interrogative (Auer 2014; Fox and Thompson 2010; Thompson et al. 2015), as seen in Excerpt (37):

- (37) Michael: what kinda solution you-you: uh: u:se. you [h use-
 Vivian: → [Bausch and
 Lomb,
 (0.3)
 Michael: oh do you?

Vivian's informing action is not a clause, but a noun phrase this time, which Michael takes as both a responsive action and an initiating action, responding to it with a typical response to an informing action, the 'pro-repeat' minimal clausal *oh do you?*.

12. That is, apart from a relatively closed set of sequence types, including those initiated by noticing, try-marked referent introduction, greeting, leave-taking, thanking, apologizing, and the like, whose routinized and formulaic properties exempt them from the claim I am arguing for here (see also Mazeland 2013: 487).

13. That non-clausal turns are interpretable in terms of preceding turns is not new, of course; see especially Auer (2014), and Helasvuo (2001a, b), who presents a number of supporting instances from Finnish conversations, focusing specifically on collaborative NP turns and turns consisting of 'free NPs'. What may be new is my argumentation concerning clausal and sub-clausal turns in terms of social action.

In each case, a clause with a predicate is responded to by a format that's not a clause, but whose social action is oriented to by participants in terms of the previous clausal format.

So, to return to informings, I noted that 182/200 informings are done with clauses in English. Intriguingly, in the 18 informings which are not clausal, the informing is done by a bit of talk which is not an initiating action, but is itself serving as a response to a question or a repair initiation. And these questions and repair initiations are clausal, as seen in (38), where Emma asks Lottie a declarative question, a repair-initiator which seeks confirmation that Lottie does go out Sunday night:

- (38) Emm: you go out Sunday night then.=
 Lot:→ =yeah.
 Emm: ah ha:h,

Returning to questions, discussed just above, it may seem strange to propose that questions are generally done with clauses. After all, questions like these are easy to find in any conversation:

- (39) Maureen:→ where,
 Terry: yea:h.
 Abbie: over by- (.) uh- (.) Thornton Elementary school,
 (40) Maureen:→ .tch what about uhm:, (.) Mou:nds.
 (2.1)
 Abbie: (haven't) tried Mounds.

However, these are again only apparently deviant cases, since in each of these instances the less-than-clausal question is not the initiating action in its sequence. Questions such as those in (39) and (40), known as 'follow-up questions', again build off of the form of a previous clause in the larger sequence (Mazeland 2013:488), as can be readily seen when we examine the sequential context in which these three extracts occur. Excerpt (39) is embedded in this sequence:

- (41) Abbie: they live very close to you guys >they live< in: walking
 distance to you guys.
 Terry: uUmhm:,
 (0.5)
 Abbie: yeah.
 Maureen:→ where,
 Terry: yea:h.
 (.)
 Abbie: over by- (.) uh- (.) Thornton Elementary school,

Excerpt (40) occurs in the context of Abbie's response to her previous (clausal) interrogative:

(42) [Talking about where to buy bird feed]

Maureen: has she tried Chickadee De:pot,
(.)

Abbie: we went to Chicadee Depot fir:st, (,) and then went to
Wi:l:d Bi:rds.

Maureen: hmm.

Maureen:→ .tch what about uhm:, (,) Mou:nds.
(2.1)

Abbie: (haven't) tried Mounds.

And Laura's teasing NP offer 😊 *flavor preference* 😊? closes a sequence in which Mom's offers are both clausal, as seen in (43):

(43) [Donna is a guest at Mom and Laura's house.]

1 Mom: would you like some m:ore water, or some hot tea, [or coffee,
[several lines later]

2 Mom: would you like cream or sugar, Donna?

3 Donna: I need both.

4 Laura:→ 😊 *flavor preference* 😊?

5 Michelle: [ha[haha

Donna: [haha

Laura: [haha

It is well-known that repair work is often done with turns that are not clauses (see Benjamin 2013; Kendrick 2015), as shown in this example from Benjamin (2013:76), where the trouble-source turn is a clause, but both the repair initiation (line 3) and the repair (lines 5 and 7) are done with NP turns:

(44) [CallFriend-s6629, 2:28]

1 A: you heard from Kamu hh

2 (0.4)

3→ B: who?

4 (.)

5→ A: Kim

6 (0.2)

7→ A: that little Kim

10 (1.3)

11 B: yeah

12 (1.0)

13 A: Ka- I call her Kamu sh@e gets so ma@d a@t me @ @ @

The data reveal, then, that if some turn that is not a clause is working to do a social action, we can show that it is dependent on the grammar of the social action of a prior *clausal* format. In other words, non-clausal social actions lean on, or are 'symbiotic' with, nearby clausal social actions (Auer 2014).

6. Scaffolding

A final piece of evidence for the role of clauses as a major vehicle for social action, as well as for smaller units depending on clauses, comes from 'scaffolding' in child language (Scollon 1976). Scollon suggests that in sequences such as this, with a child at the 'one-word' stage, a major part of child language acquisition involves an adult scaffolding a predicate to a child's noun to form a clause:

- (45) Child: cow
Mom: yeah, that's a cow.

Children at this age are immersed in the process of learning how to use language to do social work. With such adult 'scaffolding,' children come to appreciate not only the structure of simple clauses in their language, but also the kinds of social work that clauses can do. In (45), according to Scollon, the prosody of both the child's and the Mom's utterances is of interest. The child's *cow* is uttered with final falling intonation, which Mom interprets as a noticing (rather than, say, as a question), as evidenced by her clause, which is not only prosodically matched to that of the child, but is also the norm for doing noticings in English. The child thus receives input not only on the predicate-nominal clause format, but also on how to use this type of clause to do a noticing in English.

7. Conclusion and outlook

My aim in this paper is to have made a convincing case for 'clause' as the major vehicle for social action in a language in which 'clause' has been grammaticized as a robust unit, a recurrent grammatical format. My hope is that researchers working on a range of languages might explore the extent to which 'clause' has been grammaticized in their languages, to highlight the similarities and differences in the grammar of social actions done with talk in everyday interactions around the world.

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Appendix. Transcription symbols¹⁴

i. Transcript layout

ROS:	Speaker identification
???:, ():	Questionable speaker identification
→	Target line
⇒	Target line (responsive)

ii. Temporal and sequential relationships, including how different parts of talk are related in time

getting up a[wfu:lly early] you[kno:w,] [mm: hm:] [mm h]m,	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<	Curtailed pronunciation of preceding syllable
<hey	Following talk starts earlier than expected ('left push')

14. Much of the empirical material used for this study was originally transcribed by Gail Jefferson. I have retained her transcription in large part but I have normalized the orthography. For an overview of Jefferson's system as it evolved over time, see Jefferson (2004). The materials used for this paper have by and large been transcribed using this system. For the layout of the transcription symbol list below we have been inspired by Hepburn & Bolden (2013).

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

pa:y	Period for unit-final pitch falling to low
no:w?	Question mark for unit-final pitch rising to high
no,;	Comma for unit-final pitch slightly rising or falling
they-	Dash for unit-final level pitch
ehhh!	Exclamation mark for 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	Rise-fall pitch on following syllable
huh	Stress or emphasis
YOU MIGHT NOT	Loud volume
°yeah°	Soft (low) volume
°°mm hm?°°	Extra soft volume
kn*ow, Italy*	Talk within asterisks indicates creaky voice
‘em	Apostrophe indicates non-standard orthographical omission of letters
😊 I- I wi:ll 😊	Smile voice

iv. Met commentary and uncertain hearings

()	Untranscribable
(mm)	Uncertain hearing
(li'l)/(loo:k)	Alternative hearings
((clears throat)) ((level, stylized))	Non-linguistic sound or transcriptionist's comment

v. Other sound-related features

(h)	Word-internal laugh pulse
hh	Aspiration (outbreath)
.hh or 'hh	Aspiration (inbreath)
hhuh huh, hhehe, hehe, khhhh, haha, ihhh	Laughter
.ihhhhh	Ingressive laughter
(TSK), tch!, .ts	Click
@@	Laughter
.pt, .t, .k	Audible mouth opening

Linguistic units and their systems

Completeness, self-reference, and contingency

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A theoretical discussion of units in linguistic theory would be, in a sense, incomplete without a discussion of the systems, whether overt or implied, that the units are associated with. This paper traces conceptualizations of units and their accompanying systems in several disciplines. We identify some important problems with rule-based accounts (Parsons 1937) of social action and discuss the transition to non-rule-based theory afforded by ethnomethodology (e.g. Garfinkel 1963, 1967; Heritage 1984, 2011). We draw direct parallels between these issues and analogous developments in mathematical logic (Gödel 1992) and philosophy of mind (Fodor 1968, 1983; Lucas 1961; Putnam 1960, 1967 etc.), and argue that these stem directly from fundamental properties of a class of all formal systems which permit self-reference. We argue that, since these issues are architectural in nature, linguistic theory which postulates that linguistic units are the outputs of a consistent, self-referential, rule-based formal systems (e.g. Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch 2002) will inevitably run into similar problems. This is further supported by examples from actual language use which, as a class, will elude any theoretical explanation grounded in such a system.

Keywords: units, actions, incompleteness, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, formal system, rules, norms, Gödel, online speech, contingency, isotropy

1. Introduction

Chafe once stated that “researchers are always pleased when the phenomena they are studying allow them to identify units. Units can be counted and their distributions analyzed, and they can provide handles on things that would otherwise be obscure. Unless all of us have been deceiving ourselves badly, language does make use of units of various kinds.” (1994: 58). Units have been, at least for the past century or so, central to linguistic description and theorization, and language is often

presumed to be comprised of units nested in units all generated by some system. Regularities in language and interaction are commonly attributed to the presence of some underlying unit, if only the specifics of the unit could be unearthed.

Units as theoretical constructs, however, do not occur in isolation. A key component of unit-hood is the implied existence of some system or theory which delineates the dimensions, composition, or means of interpretation or recognition of these units. A unit of distance, for example, cannot exist independently of some system of measurement which sanctions what is to be measured, and under what conditions. Likewise, all units are necessarily abstract at some level: the delineations of unit composition and sanctioned means of measurement, interpretation and recognition necessitate the theoretical elevation or centrality of specific sets of measurable qualities of given phenomena, and the simultaneous backgrounding of others. Although the precise quantities of units are fundamentally empirical, or at least presumed to be, it makes little sense to talk about metres, for example, as if they were independently extant empirical entities.¹ A central theme in this paper is that the postulation of units in studies of language and interaction is often accompanied by specific presuppositions regarding the existence and configuration of systems that our units are accompanied by. If we speak of primitive or atomic units in language, for example, phonemes, nouns, or features (whether phonological or syntactic), we also presuppose a set of conditions, sanctioned means of measurement or identification, and overarching system of combination or interaction between these units. When we speak of units as the generated products of some system (e.g. 'sentences', or 'turns', or 'utterances'), we also make similar presuppositions regarding the configuration of some overarching system or theory. Despite the common predilection to regard units as being independent objects to be discovered, units do not, and cannot exist independently. This article addresses the problem of characterizing units in conversation analytic and linguistic theory through a historical overview of changes in the conceptualization of the architecture of linguistic and interactional systems.

Since Parsons, the way that social actions are construed has changed in a number of important ways. *The structure of social action* (Parsons 1937) generally characterized actions as being discrete entities manipulated by a closed context-free formal system with a strict input – rule – output distinction. Since then, however, actions have come to be regarded as context-sensitive (Sacks et al. 1974)

1. This paper takes the position that any unit recruited in theory depends on the postulation of some domain of unit-hood, accompanying conditions and means of measurement, etc., and is fundamentally grounded in cognition. Resolving the question of whether empirically grounded units are still units or not independently of their being conceived is outside the scope of this paper.

“contingent products” (Schegloff 1996a) grounded in and symbiotic with a continually (re-) created “situation” (Garfinkel 1967).² This transition has co-occurred with advances in understanding of the way that linguistic structure is conceptualized: as locally produced and emergent (Hopper 1987, 2011; Linell 2009, 2013), rather than being the static output of an a priori formal system. A similar strand of research in mathematics, philosophy of mind, and cognition which parallels these developments will be outlined in the following section.

Against this theoretical backdrop, asking the question as to whether we can adequately postulate units (either empirically or as theoretical constructs) in studies of language and interaction depends critically upon researchers’ own conceptualizations of the architecture and boundary conditions of the system that the candidate units belong to, and examining such can expose covert assumptions inherent in the utilization of linguistic and interactional categories recruited in contemporary theory.³ It is argued here that if we take seriously the argument that any aspect of linguistic and interactional behaviour has an isotropic⁴ component (Fodor 1983), then no formal system which seeks to completely model linguistic⁵ or interactional behaviour can generate a set of outputs isomorphic to the linguistic behaviour of any speaker. Furthermore, it is argued that any conceptualization of language which postulates the existence of a consistent formal system that generates linguistic outputs will be formally incomplete⁶ and unable to generate all valid linguistic strings, whether or not isotropy is also postulated.

This paper is comprised of three main sections. In the first, we will trace developments in the study of social action. We will briefly discuss system-based accounts of action from the early 20th century, highlight some problems that rule-based accounts of these phenomena encounter, and discuss the transition

2. Parsons’ model does incorporate contextual elements as part of the calculus for generating well-formed actions. Context in this model is, however, somewhat static, and, more importantly, subordinate to and completely delineated by the logic of the underlying formal system.

3. For example, turn constructional units, which are widely regarded as being contingent, context-bound and highly localized, are still commonly described utilizing syntactic descriptions that were originally conceptualized and defined in the context of a radically different acontextual system, presenting various problems (Ford et al. 2013).

4. As will be discussed below, isotropy in Fodor’s sense refers to the necessity of considering the entire state of the cognitive apparatus when considering any individual instantiation of an element or output of the apparatus. Isotropic elements are by definition non-compositional.

5. That is, for example, a system which minimally comprises *both* a syntactic and semantic ‘module’, as discussed below.

6. ‘Formally incomplete’ is used in the sense of mathematical logic (e.g. Gödel’s 1931 paper): a system that is formally incomplete entails the existence of true theorems (or valid outputs) that are not generable by the system.

in understanding to non-rule based accounts afforded by ethnomethodological accounts of social action. The following section, **Systems and Incompleteness**, draws parallels between these issues highlighted in the social sciences with analogous developments in mathematical logic and philosophy of mind, and argues that the problems that rule-based accounts of social action run into, discussed in the previous section, follow directly from fundamental properties of all formal systems that permit self-reference, as originally discussed by Kurt Gödel in his landmark 1931 paper. The final section provides actual examples of speech that exemplify this issue, being both interpretable and produced as intentionally grammatically deviant by design, and paralleling both the liar antinomy and Gödel's proof of the first Incompleteness Theorem.

2. Social action, unit acts, interaction

Parsons' object of investigation is the "unit act", an analytic unit of social action conceived as a composite of abstract elements: a rational agent or "actor"; an "end" or future state of affairs towards which the process of action is oriented; a 'situation' or context; and a mode of orientation, in which a set of normative relationships between these elements mediates the resultant units (Parsons 1937: 44; see also Heritage 1984: 10).

The specific details of this model are of less concern to us than the boundary conditions of the model itself. Actions are units, unit-acts are the products of a system, and to Parsons, the system figures centrally. Despite the incorporation of actors as categories into the system, the eventual form that actions take is grounded in the so-called "objective elements" of a given situation, and the determination of these elements is static and rule-based. Subjective orientation to a context is relevant only so far as it is "scientifically valid" (Parsons 1937: 79). In other words, Parsons' system only generates actions that converge with the system's delineation of what constitutes an objective conceptualization of a situation, its relevant aspects, etc., and only when such actions converge with what the system deems a rational act. As Schegloff (1996b: 165) points out, actual actions to Parsons are "of interest insofar as they can be analytically decomposed" into their respective elements, and actions which do not fall under such criteria are thus epiphenomenal:

(this approach) comes to the materials of everyday life with a theoretical filter which separates the sociological wheat from the chaff, the gold from the dross, the important from the trivial, the real from the apparent, the enduring from the transient. Generally this has resulted in accounts that formulate the actions being characterized not by reference to the projects of the actors who enacted them and

were their recipients, but only by reference to the terms of the theory that was 'processing' them, the only terms of reference to which they were taken to matter. (Schegloff 1996b: 165–166)

While at its best, Parsons' work is an accomplishment of depth and rigour, the ultimate effect of this type of strictly deterministic positivist approach is here, at its worst, utter circularity: the system embedded in Parsons' theory generates unit acts based on the relevant system-internal representations and rules; discrepancies in the characteristics of individual actions are relevant only when they refer to system-internal distinctions; finer details are irrelevant, and any abnormalities are 'errors' (Parsons 1937: 46, 66) of rationality or of (a mis-)conceptualization of the objective nature of a context, rather than actions in their own right. Such a theory is empirically dismissive: all actions must be generated by the system, because by definition the system doesn't generate non-actions, and anything not generated by the system is not an action.

There has been much said already on the natural tension between radical rationalism vs. empiricism, and it doesn't serve our purpose to elaborate much further, except to say that the extremes of either pole seem somewhat untenable as a sole approach and that some middle ground seems suitable. Parsons takes the fairly system-centric stance that all "knowledge – even the commonsense knowledge of everyday life – involves implicitly, if not explicitly, systematic theory" (1937: 10), and while a wide range of reasonable positions varying in the degree to which "commonsense knowledge" is systematic might exist, none would likely deny that action recognition, for example, whether by discourse participants or by researchers, necessarily involves some degree of abstract typification. No two greetings are ever precisely identical, yet a greeting in first position demarcates a range of utterances that are made relevant in second position, for example, and the similarities to and differences from other utterances in similar contexts create linkages, relevancies, and norms. The goal here is not to ask how much abstraction is amenable to good theory. A better framed question might ask how our conceptualizations of the systems, laws or organizing principles that we presume to be responsible for the phenomena we study predispose our theories to different degrees and types of abstraction.

Parsons' model postulates the centrality of a formal system, which generates actions as outputs. Like any formal system, it has its own internal set of categories, or alphabet; its own grammar, or logically sanctioned means of relating and combining its set of categories; its own rules of inference and so on. An inescapable consequence of formal systems is a strict conceptual distinction between input, system-sanctioned rules, and outputs. This distinction itself is a fundamental boundary condition inherent to any formal system.

There are problems with any account of social action that is purely rule-based.^{7, 8} Heritage points out that a rule-based account can never “completely or exhaustively define the character or legally-possible range of conduct of an activity” (1984:124). Even with such prototypically simple cases as a game of chess, although a formal system or rule-based account may be able to model the pieces, the specifics of movement and capture, conditions of victory, and so on, there always remains “an open set of unstated conditions of the rules’ application” (1984:126), and no formal system can capture all of the “unstated terms of contract” (Garfinkel 1963:199). Discussing rules and chess in specific, Garfinkel states:

One can at one’s move change pieces around on the board – so that, although the overall positions are not changed, different pieces occupy the squares – and then move. On the several occasions on which I did this, my opponents were disconcerted, tried to stop me, demanded an explanation of what I was up to, were uncertain about the legality (but wanted to assert its illegality nevertheless), made it clear to me that I was spoiling the game for them ... they were not satisfied when I asked that they point out where the rules prohibited what I had done. Nor were they satisfied when I pointed out that I had not altered the material positions and, further, that the maneuver did not affect my chances of winning. If they were not satisfied, neither could they say to their satisfaction what was wrong. Prominently in their attempts to come to terms, they would speak of the obscurity of my motives. (ibid., see also Heritage 1984: 125)

Although a rule-based account may specify aspects of the character of a game of chess, they do not specify the purpose of play, what a game is, who is to play it, and so on. A collection of socially shared norms may be a better metaphor to describe the organization of actions surrounding a game.⁹ Although these norms may overlap very closely between players at times, in which case they may start to look like rules, for example, in initial board setup positions, or concerning the

7. Or indeed with any account of phenomena resulting from general cognition that is solely rule-based, as below.

8. Discussion of ‘rules’ here is purposely, narrowly focused to refer to rules in the generative sense, that is, a rule here refers to either a specific instantiation of sanctioned combinatorial logic in a formal system, or the implied existence of such, for example, when some consistent formal system is presumed to be responsible for the generation of speech etc. even if such a system is not explicitly stated.

9. Throughout this chapter, I utilize the term ‘norm.’ It is not my intention to exhaustively define ‘norm’ here. Rather, the term ‘norm’ is used in contrast to the rather narrow sense of the term ‘rule’ employed here. Whereas ‘rules’ are conceived here as the discrete logical operations of a formal system, ‘norms’ are conceived as the structural regularities and resources utilized by speakers to produce utterances, or as context, or templates of expectation.

specifics of movement and capture, at other times there are inevitable disagreements as to the essential character of some aspect of the game or activity. Each individual brings their own expectations to a particular setting or context, and, more importantly, the realization of these expectations and their specific consequences for an instance of interaction are always negotiated in situ: are players allowed to take-back moves in casual games? In all casual games? What about in competitive games? What constitutes a competitive game? Is the purpose to win or to enjoy the game? In a game of mismatched skill, are handicaps allowed such that one player begins with more or less pieces? Even the rules themselves may begin to look less like rules and more like norms when one observes a typical game. In any game, a set of rules is not what dictates the means and form of interactions between players. Rather, a rule book, for example, mediates, or serves as context for the mutual negotiation of how interactions between players are to be constrained. Of key importance is that, even when both players are in agreement with some external formulation of rules, it is the fact of the agreement, rather than the existence of some external formulation, which determines the character of the game.

A larger problem with a purely systemic, rule-based account involves the orientation of individuals to rules themselves. Heritage (1984: 126) supposes the following scenario, illustrating a “sociologically common” class of examples:

Suppose there is a rule for greetings which runs to the effect: do not initiate greetings except with persons who are acquaintances. And suppose we subsequently witness a man greeting another who we know is not an acquaintance. We can either conclude that he broke the rule or we can infer that, *via the use of the rule*, he was seeking to treat the other *as* an acquaintance. The second interpretation is more likely when, for example, our man is greeting a new colleague at the office, and this reflexive use of a ‘rule-governed action’ to redefine the context can itself become oriented to by the participants – for example when our man, as portrayed in a thousand Hollywood movies, greets a new employee in the typing pool and she ‘knowingly’ (for example ‘coily’ or ‘brusquely’) responds. In this case, not only is the reflexive, redeterminative aspect of the rule’s application being used but, we might say, knowingly exploited by both participants who can *display* that exploitation as part and parcel of the greeting and its reciprocation.

If such prototypical social action as greetings were governed by a formal system, and individuals can orient to and violate such rules as an exploitation of context, the rules coded into the system could not account for the actions the system supposedly generates. Axiomatic systems are limited by their boundary conditions: by their alphabet or axioms and rules of combination; and, critically, by the fact that they are axiomatic systems. It is a fundamental property of formal systems in general that they possess unstated terms which are immutable by the system

itself. Grosholz (2016: 339) writes that “the relation of an axiomatized system to a thinking person, the relations among axiomatized systems, even the source of the axioms themselves: all these things remain unstated in an axiomatized system”. The fact that individuals seem to have no problem orienting to, breaking, and constantly reshaping the rules that supposedly govern their conduct suggests that their actions are not the outputs of such rules.

Heritage (2011) reflects on new strands of thought emerging in the 1950s which would provide alternatives to strictly rule-based and determinist approaches to studies of action, and to social theory in general. Building on ideas first developed by Husserl, Schütz’s notion of “typification” (1959) and Wittgenstein’s “family resemblances” (1953) provided fertile ground for subsequent developments in the field. The insight that the concepts we utilize to organize our conception of the world are “abstractions from a broad range of empirical instances on the basis of empirical frequencies and underlying linkages” (Heritage 2011: 264) laid the foundation for Rosch’s theory of prototypes (Rosch 1973, 1975, 1983; Rosch and Mervis 1975; also see Heritage 2011: 265), which gives empirical support for this at the lexical level, and provides an account for how the context of an utterance both depends upon and informs an ongoing interpretation of lexical items (see also Bybee 2010). The core notion, however, that the abstractions which we derive from multiple empirical instances form the basis of the categories which we use to navigate the social world, has been productively utilized to account for a much broader array of social phenomena. Whether in a game of chess or a greeting, if we conceptualize the organizing principle for these situations to be, rather than a set of rules, a set of culturally shared norms abstracted away from multiple empirical instances, the issues outlined above for a systemic rule-based account of action disappear: in a given specific context, previous instances delineate the range of expected or relevant courses of action, but the expected and the relevant themselves form part of the context. A greeting is *made relevant* when our man above comes in contact with an acquaintance, and the tendency for greetings to be associated with acquaintances is similarly made relevant when a greeting is initiated with someone. The fact of this relevance is shared, and thus the greeting of one who is not an acquaintance, in our above example, itself presupposes that a greeting was made relevant, and the new colleague is treated *as* an acquaintance. This exemplifies the inherent reflexivity of action: participants are simultaneously analyzing and reconstituting the activity or event they are engaged in. The deviation from more common courses of action here is not an error, or a violation of a systemic rule then (as it would be in a formal system-governed account), but the orientation to specific facets of socially shared categories, norms, and so on.

Subsequent work on social action is generally marked by a departure from a structure- or system-centric theory of action altogether. To Garfinkel (1967),

context, or the situation in which action occurs, rather than being a static objective entity arrived at via access to scientifically valid knowledge (Parsons 1937), is continually transformed, being created and reconstituted by actions, which themselves are seen as contingent products of their interactional settings. Time too is seen as an integral component of the unfolding “mutual elaboration of circumstances and their unfolding actions” (Heritage 1984:132). Actions themselves are both prospective, making relevant subsequent actions, and retrospective: prior formulations can be recast by subsequent actions. In this view, there is no input-rule-output distinction, and Garfinkel’s transforming situation itself is the constant orientation of participants to the machinery¹⁰ which conditions action. Rather than being outputs, actions are both machinery and product.

To summarize, in this section we’ve shown that advances in social theory suggest that actions cannot be called units, if units are conceived as the abstract products of a formal system. It needs to be pointed out for reasons outlined above that even if a given system and its concomitant set of rules, internal categories, and so on are not explicitly stated, if *some* formal system is *presumed* to be responsible for the generation of actions, the accompanying theory will eventually run into issues of completeness or consistency. That is, as we will see below, there will exist actions which our system cannot generate. The capability of individuals to orient to the ‘rules’ themselves is of key importance, and, as it turns out, the problem of completeness in such cases is generalizable to all formal systems.

3. Systems and incompleteness

What we have seen so far is that theoretical treatment of action in the social sciences that postulates the existence of a formal system generally runs into two main issues: (1) ‘Rules’ in accounts of actions are better conceptualized as ‘norms’ or ‘prototypes’, themselves the products of multiple previous empirical instances, and (2) Any rule-based account of action will run into problems if it allows the orientation of participants to the rules themselves. What we will see in the following discussion is that both of these issues are interrelated and (2) turns out to be

10. ‘Machinery’ here is used in the sense of Sacks (1992). Machinery, in Sacks’ terms, does not imply a rule-like or mechanistic formulation of language or interaction. Whereas systemic rules are, notionally, those which dictate what people do in interaction or produce linguistically, ‘machinery’ refers to that which people utilize to do interaction or language. Rules are, in principle, inviolable since they are presumed to reflect the physical organizing principles of a system. Norms, however, which comprise part of a machinery of interaction, are pragmatically violable, and the violation of norms can achieve specific interactional ends.

the direct consequence of an inherent and universal limitation of all formal systems as discussed in Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems.

"Probably the most important theorem in the literature of modern logic" (Suppes 1957: 70) is Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems. Prior to the publication of Gödel's paper in 1931, *Principia Mathematica* (Whitehead & Russell 1910, 1912, 1913) demonstrated the consensus view at the time, that all true mathematical statements could be derived from some consistent deductive system starting from a finite number of axioms, in which each theorem follows logically from the axioms and their derived theorems according to a limited number of rules. In a deductive system, every product, or theorem, follows from the sequential application of mechanical rules of inference to other theorems, via a manipulation of system-internal symbols. A chain of symbolic manipulations can be constructed such that the derivation of a given theorem can be expressed by a sequence of formulae, or calculus, linking a product theorem with an initial axiom of the system (Braithwaite 1992). Gödel's theorem, however, showed that **all** consistent formal systems which meet certain basic requirements contain undecidable propositions.¹¹ No formal system of this type can be both complete and consistent. This was accomplished, to simplify things somewhat, via a version of the liar antinomy, though Gödel himself states that any epistemological antinomy could conceivably be used for a similar proof (1992: 176). Simply stated, the liar paradox consists of the fact that the truth of the statement A, "This sentence is false", implies its falsity, and the falsity of the statement implies its truth (Serényi 2003). An analogous statement, B, which informally stated, could read "B is unprovable in this system" (that is, "this sentence cannot be generated by this system"), yields a problem: if B is in fact provable in the system, then it is false (and thus problematic, because any consistent system should not generate false theorems); if B is in fact, as it claims, not provable in the system, then it is true, but the system cannot generate it (and the system is thus incomplete, as there exist true theorems which the system cannot generate). Interestingly, though perhaps unsurprisingly, the consequences for formal structuralist theories of social action as well as for formal systems of logic are the same when the systems permit reference to their own rules:¹² self-reference renders the system incomplete, and implies the existence of true or valid statements, actions, etc. which the system cannot generate.

Gödel's incompleteness theorems also have consequence for theories of mind. Putnam's (1960, 1967) *machine state functionalist* and Fodor's (1968) *psy-*

11. In particular, to satisfy these requirements, a system must be able to represent recursive relations via formulae in the system, the system must be able to distinguish valid from invalid derivations of the system, and the system must be able to express arithmetic.

12. Assuming of course, the system is complex enough for the theorems to apply.

chofunctionalist theories, themselves being a response to behaviourist theories of mind, view the mind's states and events as a universal Turing machine,¹³ or other system, whose operation is algorithmic and can be fully formalized (Hopcroft & Ullman 1979) and specified with a set of instructions. Lucas (1961) however points out that Gödel's theorems show definitively that the mind cannot be modelled as any consistent, complete formal system, and Putnam later (1988, 1999) backed away from a strict machine state functionalist view. In *The Modularity of Mind* (1983), although he makes allowance for the existence of machine-functional components, or *modules* of the mind,¹⁴ Fodor rejects the hypothesis that *general intelligence* can be formalized. A central contention of Fodor's with this hypothesis is that general intelligence necessarily contains *isotropic* features. Isotropy is the tendency for information (or systems) to be non-local. That is, isotropic information or features of a system are "unencapsulated" (Fodor 1983: 106) and global, dependant on the entire state of an individual's mind. The fixation of beliefs involves a kind of epistemic interconnectedness, and is, Fodor argues, necessarily isotropic. "Everything that a scientist knows" according to Fodor (1983: 105), "is, in principle, relevant to determining what else he ought to believe. In principle (for example), our botany constrains our astronomy, if only we could think of ways to make them connect". Aside from presenting a computationally intractable task, Fodor argues that if isotropic systems are global then there is no realistic means to formalize them, since we would need to allow "the structure of an entire belief system to bear on (every) individual occasion of belief fixation" (1983: 129). General cognition in Fodor's theory is broadly compatible with the Husserlian phenomenological notions of typification mentioned above: individual instantiations of general cognition in an isotropic system are abstractions dependent upon previous empirical instances, their accompanying frequencies and underlying linkages etc.

If the human mind cannot be fully formalized by any consistent formal system, then surely the capability for language should resist such formalizations as well. This is trivial to show in the most general sense: language is capable of self-reference, and the entire system of mathematics is conceptualizable as a proper subset of language (since any mathematical concept can be expressed in language), and so a hypothetical formal system that is capable of generating all linguistic behaviour of a hypothetical person is a powerful enough system for Gödel's theorems to apply. The fact that Gödel's theorems apply, however, implies

13. A Turing machine is a hypothetical machine, or algorithm, which can emulate the logic of all possible formalizable systems.

14. These *modules*, to Fodor, are formalizable, and thus may contain discrete, local units, a static grammar, and so on.

that there will be linguistic strings that are well-formed and interpretable, but not possibly generated by this hypothetical formal system, which in turn implies that there is *no* formal system that is isomorphic to any individual's capability for language.¹⁵ This is to say nothing of the degree to which language, however defined, comprises an isotropic system.

This however may be somewhat of a simplification. Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch's (2002) faculty of language in the narrow sense (henceforth FLN, i.e. a module comprising only some computational system that is responsible for generating an internal representation via the recursive combination of system-internal elements according to a system-internal grammar) contains only a syntactic component which generates and checks strings, and not an interpretive or semantic component, which would be responsible for the interpretation of those strings. Gödel's theorems require a given system to contain propositions, or the theoretical equivalent. Fodor (1983) allows that self-contained modules are formalizable, and Hauser et al.'s thesis is that FLN is such a module, and that another formal "semantic system" (Hauser et al. 2002:1571) would presumably interpret string content. While it is true that, as conceptualized, Gödel's theorems do not apply to a hypothetical FLN module, this partitioning off of components doesn't exempt us from the Incompleteness Theorems when a semantic module is also postulated. If both of Hauser et al.'s syntactic and semantic modules are formalizable, this implies the existence of a hypothetical single formal system (which interprets string content, generates and checks strings, and contains the capacity of recursion) that is isomorphic to the combination of the two. This hypothetical system is complex enough for Gödel's theorems to apply, containing the theoretical equivalent of propositions, which in turn suggests that it will be formally incomplete, and there will exist valid interpretable utterances which the system cannot generate, implying that such a system cannot be responsible for language.^{16, 17} While interesting, the full resolution of this issue is of course beyond the scope of this paper and will be left to future inquiry.

15. An anonymous reviewer points out that notions of creativity here are relevant, and that interpretive practices between interlocutors are likely a primary driving force behind the emergence of new structure and complexity. Creativity, in the sense commonly advocated in the generative tradition as the capacity to produce an infinite number of distinct strings cannot, by definition, be responsible for producing hypothetical utterances which are well-formed but not generable by the system.

16. This is somewhat analogous to asking of the following, in which statement does the paradox occur? (1) The following statement is true. (2) The preceding statement is false.

17. Fodor, for his part, denies the plausibility of the "massive modularity" (2001: 23) hypothesis, suggesting that for the most part cognitive processes are not computations.

Other studies on the nature of linguistic structure take a different approach and do not postulate a formal system to account for linguistic behaviour. Goodwin (1979) argues that linguistic structures in natural conversation, rather than being isolated entities abstracted away from production, are contingent emergent products of a process of interaction between speaker and hearer that are shaped and reshaped on a moment to moment basis. In a similar vein is Hopper's argument:

The notion of Emergent Grammar is meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process. Grammar is hence not to be understood as a prerequisite for discourse, a prior possession attributable in identical form to both speaker and hearer. Its forms are not fixed templates but are negotiable in face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers' past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, including especially their interlocutors, whose experiences and assessments may be quite different. Moreover, the term Emergent Grammar points to a grammar which is not abstractly formulated and abstractly represented, but always anchored in the specific concrete form of an utterance. (1987: 142)

Contingency here is important. While computational or algorithmic models of grammar suppose a strict divide between system (or rule) and output, between competence and performance, or between grammatical and ungrammatical forms, Hopper here proposes an account where grammatical structure is inextricably bound up with the utterances that speakers produce. In this account, there is no single formalizable grammar which delineates grammatical or ungrammatical utterances, but rather at every position a constantly changing range of options available to speakers, varying in the degree to which they converge with or deviate from what may be positionally or contextually expected, the expectation itself (or norm) being the abstract product of numerous prior empirical instances encountered by speakers in similar positions. The means by and degree to which an uttered form is divergent from prior instances is thus a pragmatic choice. The notion of *isotropy* here too is centrally relevant, as all forms are open textured, and the precise interpretation of not only any form, but the means by which the form itself is to be interpreted are products of the state of each interlocutors' entire cognitive apparatus and the local discourse context. Gödel's theorems do not apply because there is no single consistent formal system to begin with, at least not one formalizable under current understandings.

4. Some deviant utterances

In the spirit of the above discussion consider the following small examples of common online speech:

- (1) *I'm not as think as you drunk I am*
- (2) *I can has cheezburger*
- (3) *I accidentally a word*
- (4) *Hey, I just finished all my xmas shopping early, and wrapped everything, now it's get drunk time. I can't help it if I can't words anymore.*

These are all ostensibly grammatically deviant expressions. They are also common online written forms and have a large number of related variants.^{18, 19} The context that (1) generally occurs in requires little explanation. Example (2) and its variants belong to the image macro family of memes (Gawne & Vaughan 2011; Zimmer & Carson 2011), where a caption is attached to an image, particularly of cats (also known as *lolcats*, (Gawne & Vaughan 2011)), representing speech that the cat or cats in question would have produced in the image. Examples like (3) and (4) are fairly common on internet message boards. In the case of (3), when a user makes a text post and later edits it for clarity, “EDIT: I accidentally a word”, or similar addition is often appended to the end of the original post. More on these below.

Each of (1)–(4) represents a direct orientation to grammatical norms to achieve a particular interactional aim. In all cases, divergence from grammatical norms is done in a way to *make relevant* aspects about the speaker or context. Example (1) is perhaps the most obvious of these. The ostensible or hypothetical speaker is intoxicated. Although (1) deviates from grammatical norms, the related non-deviant alternative, “I’m not as drunk as you think I am”, is immediately recoverable. The utterance accesses two recognizable “common-sense” (in the ordered systematic sense of Geertz 1983) beliefs about intoxicated individuals: they make linguistic transpositions, and they underestimate their own degree of intoxication. The presence of these in (1) thus implicates the hypothetical speaker

18. For example, *I'm not as think as I drunk you are* or *I swear to drunk I'm not God* for (1) and *I accidentally a phrase* or *I accidentally some words* etc. for (3) are both prevalent examples. Example (2) is representative of a larger subgenre of speech. See Zimmer and Carson (2011) and Gawne and Vaughan (2011) for more discussion.

19. The particulars of online speech (see Iwasaki 2015) make examples such as these possible, taking the form of spoken language while also taking advantage of there being time available for editing, as in written language, and especially poetry.

as being intoxicated. The specifics of the deviation achieves interactional effect. Example (2), like (1), also implicates the alleged speaker via the specifics of the deviation. The family of memes represented by (2) deviate fairly regularly with mismatching verb inflection, absent determiners etc. Examples like (2) serve to establish and reinforce a common-sense narrative about the cats that appear in image macros, and similarly reference previous empirical instances: a cat, which is definitively not a human, is speaking; cats lack human interactional competence, possess different preoccupations, etc.²⁰

Example (3) does not implicate the competence of the speaker in the sense of (1) and (2), so much as it implicates the suitability of a prior formulation of the speaker. As above, examples such as (3) are appended to edits of text posts when a word (or a phrase etc.) in the original post is missing or unsuitable. Like (1), (3) makes recoverable the related non-deviant form “I accidentally left out a word” or “I accidentally typed a/the wrong word”. Example (3) deviates from the non-deviant form by leaving out a word, which foregrounds the reason the utterance exists in the first place: to highlight that the speaker left out a word in the original text post. This effect is achieved via the direct reference and violation of grammatical norms.

Similarly with (4), taken from an internet message board, the interactional competence of the speaker, who previously in the discussion made an inadvertently incomprehensible utterance, is implicated and made relevant via the deviant utterance, ‘I can’t words’. As above, the utterance is constructed as deviant by design, (thus referencing grammatical norms directly) and needs to be processed as deviant in order to achieve this particular interactional effect. Interestingly, ‘words’ here contains the plural suffix *-s* suggesting that this is not simply a case of zero derivation of the noun *word* to a verb.²¹

What is remarkable about these instances is that they are intentionally produced as deviant from the outset. A theory which postulates a consistent formal syntax/semantics system would view each of these as ungrammatical and would run into problems. Each is like its own version of the liar antinomy: the utterances

20. Gawne and Vaughan (2011) similarly argue that the regular irregularities in this micro-genre contribute to ‘cat’ identity construction, as well as establish in-group cohesion.

21. An anonymous reviewer points out that the production of utterances like this reminds us of aesthetic creativity, especially in poetry. Writers are aware of linguistic and stylistic norms, and the violation of such creates an effect. This further reminds us of Gricean maxims: when a maxim is violated, an effect is created. It is possible that the underlying dynamic for all three is not only superficially similar.

are produced, by design, to be deviant in specific ways.²² If (1)–(4) are derivable by a grammar, we have a problem, because if it was derivable by the system it would not have been produced as underivable (moreover one could simply produce an example that was actually underivable to achieve the same effect). Further, if a given example is in fact underivable in the system, then we have either the problem of underivable utterances being produced by the hypothetical system (which implies the system is not responsible for them after all), or the problem of valid utterances which are not derivable in the system (which is thus incomplete).

One could perhaps postulate that the syntactic derivation crashes at some stage in the syntax module, but is shipped to the formal semantic module anyways. This is a bad result for a system-based theory since it implies that crashed derivations can both not only be interpreted, but also interpreted in ways specific to the particulars of the crash, in effect nullifying the binary grammatical/ungrammatical distinction, and thus calling into question the validity of the notion that a formal system generates linguistic strings (since under this scenario, all strings become interpretable, regardless of their well-formedness). One could also postulate that examples such as these are treated as fixed phrases, and bypass some critical system module (e.g. FLN) or component (i.e. they are not syntactically processed at all), but if this is the case, then it not only raises the question of why the interpretation of these utterances **requires** processing of deviations from structural norms, but it also raises the question as to whether this component (e.g. FLN) is necessary to produce language in the first place. At any rate, since cognitive processes which do not utilize ‘modules’ are, by definition, isotropic and domain-general (Fodor 1983), if this supposed linguistic module or component can in fact be bypassed, then it suggests not only that our hypothetical system does not produce all language, but that domain-general processes can produce language, and our system (comprising a formal syntax and a formal semantic module) becomes an unnecessary postulate to account for language.²³ It is not simply the case that a specific grammar cannot generate examples like (1)–(4), no hypothetical consistent formal system can.²⁴ As with Heritage’s greeting example above, for these we can either conclude that the speaker has broken some rule

22. If $F(x)$ represents the ‘ungrammatical’ utterance, then $G(F(x))$ represents the illocutionary force of the utterance: ‘ $F(x)$ is underivable in the system (and so notice the way that it is)’. $G()$ then is analogous to a Gödel formalization of a liar antinomy.

23. If one wished, theoretically speaking, to salvage only the syntactic module, it would be required to postulate that there is no formalizable semantic module, and all interpretation would necessarily be domain-general. This would also imply the lack of a discrete semantic/pragmatic divide.

24. If we design a system that can generate (1)–(4), one could then formulate an utterance that relates to the revised grammatical rules of this hypothetical system.

and created an ungrammatical utterance, or we can infer that *via the use of the 'rule'*, the speaker is creating an utterance that deviates from grammatical norms in order to achieve a particular interactional end.

5. Concluding remarks

In the preceding discussion we've discussed different accounts of linguistic and interactional units, and argued that any system which seeks to model language or interaction will eventually run into problems if a complex enough formal system with a strict conceptual input-rule-output divide is postulated. The applicability of Gödel's theorems is an inescapable consequence of the utilization of formal systems, and is as relevant in linguistics or conversation analysis as it is in mathematics and the cognitive sciences. This paper has provided evidence for the proposal that structure in language is emergent and that, rather than being the outputs of an a priori system, structure is simultaneously both output and machinery. Grammatical norms are comprised of the serial and lateral linkages and abstractions between similar or related prior instances of forms and context: this contingency and isotropy make it utterly resistant to complete, consistent formalization. This paper echoes the call in Ford et al. (2013) to pursue theoretical accounts that are sensitive to context and unfolding contingency. As well, just as the 'products' of a 'system' may fruitfully be viewed as contingent, it should be clear too that our theories or the systems we presume to account for structure work in the same way and are cut from the same fabric, being locally produced and reproduced, emergent and contingent, and both medium and outcome of practices. Units are necessarily abstract at some level, and when they are recruited in theory attention needs to be paid not only to which empirical or theoretical dimensions of a given unit are elevated or centralized and which are categorized as peripheral, but also to the often implicit higher level organization of those dimensions into a system or theory.

With this in mind, the common view which equates the forms that speakers produce with units, or even the conceptualization of these forms as the concrete instantiations of more abstract units (which are themselves the outputs of some consistent formal system conceived at the level of rules), is problematic. Doing so presupposes that the products of discourse are static, rather than contingent, and also more importantly it suggests they are static outputs, rather than being both machinery and product. Instead, if units are to be productively utilized as a metaphor for linguistic description, perhaps it is at the level of abstract expectations or templates of what could or what might occur at a position, rather than what does. These abstract, contingent expectations, typifications forged of prior

encountered instances of all that is made relevant in a given position, might thus be considered units (whether they be units of syntax or of action etc.). As analysts then we can only ever observe units indirectly, via their effect on the speech produced by interlocutors in the form of normative pressure, which can be either conformed with or deviated from.

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Free NPs as units in Finnish

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This article focuses on free NPs, i.e. noun phrases that are grammatically not part of any clause but form units of their own. Using the methodology of discourse-functional and interactional linguistics, I analyze the morphosyntactic, prosodic and interactional features of free NPs in conversational Finnish. With its rich morphological marking, Finnish provides an interesting perspective on free NPs: Morphosyntactic features, together with semantics, are crucial in determining the status of an NP as a clausal constituent or a free NP. The prosodic analysis shows that the majority of free NPs show clear prosodic boundaries, signalled for example by speaker change, coherent intonation contour, pause or pitch reset. Free NPs serve various interactional functions, such as making assessments or disambiguating referents. These are functions which operate on something already established in the discourse. Free NPs, however, can also initiate something new for example by making requests or introducing new topics.

Keywords: Finnish, free NP, interactional linguistics, prosody, syntax, morphosyntax

1. Introduction

The focus in this article is on free NPs as units in Finnish, applying the methodology of discourse-functional and interactional linguistics (see Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018; Selting & Couper-Kuhlen (eds.) 2001; Laury et al. (eds.) 2015). By free NPs I mean noun phrases that are grammatically not part of any clause. They have also been called “unattached” NPs (Ono & Thompson 1994; Tao 1996; Ford et al. 2002) or “detachments” (Barnes 1985; Lagae 2007).

Free NPs are not used much in Modern Standard (written) Finnish, except in certain specific discourse contexts such as titles. They do, however, occur in spoken Finnish and in less formal written texts (Helasvuo 1991, 2001), as well as in the earliest written records of Finnish (from the 16th century; Helasvuo & Inaba 2013). Here I explore the use of free NPs in present-day conversational

Finnish, with data from the Arkisyn database of modern conversational Finnish (see Section 2 for a more detailed description of the data). Consider Example (1). The participants are having dinner in a restaurant, and Päivi has been telling the others about her habit of emphasizing what she says with broad movements of her hands and with certain sound effects. After joint laughter, Päivi starts commenting on someone passing by their table (line 1).

(1) (SaPu 117)

- 1 Päivi: *kato. kato mikä paita.*
 look.IMP.2SG look.IMP.2SG what.NOM shirt
 ‘Look. Look what a shirt.’
- 2 Varpu: *jes mitkä tatska-t.*
 PTC what.PL tattoo-PL.NOM
 ‘Yes. What (great) tattoos.’
- 3 *ei-k mu-n tartte kuvail-la, (.)*
 NEG.3SG-Q 1SG-GEN need.CONNEG describe-INF
 ‘Don’t I have to describe’
- 4 *[tatuoint-i-en kuvio-i-t,]*
 tattoo-PL-GEN pattern-PL-PAR
 ‘the patterns of the tattoos?’
- 5 Päivi: *[onneks mu-l oli nyt nää] piilolinssi-t et mä*
 luckily 1SG-ADE be-PST.3SG now these contact.lens-PL COMP 1SG
nä-i.
 see-PST.1SG
 ‘luckily I had [my] contact lenses in so that I could see.’
- 6 *ERIKoine k- (.) erikoine ratkasu.*
 special.NOM special.NOM solution.NOM
 ‘a very special, special solution.’
- 7 Varpu: *hehehe nii,*
 PTC
 ‘((laughing)) right’

In line 6, Päivi makes an assessment of the tattoos of someone passing by. The assessment is formed as an NP, which is not part of either the preceding or the following clause. It also forms an intonation unit of its own (Chafe 1994; Du Bois et al. 1992). It is thus a free NP. The assessment receives an aligning response in line 7. The free NP in line 6 is in the nominative singular. The previous utterance (line 5) ends with a complement clause, containing the transitive verb *näi* ‘I saw’ but no object. The free NP in line 6, however, does not function as an object of *näi* ‘saw’, as it does not carry the appropriate case marking (in order to func-

tion as an object of *näi*, it would have to be in the accusative case) nor does it fit semantically as an argument of the previous clause: the semantics of the free NP *erikoine ratkasu* ‘a special solution’ is such that is not conceivable as an object of seeing through contact lenses.

In the data examined, free NPs are emergent units rather than categorical ones (on emergence, see Hopper 1987; for emerging syntagmatic chains, see Auer 2005). Grammatical constructions, such as free NPs, are responsive to local contingencies and the temporal progression of talk (cf. Pekarek Doehler 2011; Pekarek Doehler et al. 2015). The interpretation of an NP as a free NP or a clausal constituent unfolds in time. This interpretation is guided by morphosyntactic, semantic and prosodic features. In terms of syntactic features, free NPs are independent of any clause and form free constructions, as manifested by morphosyntactic marking (such as case, number). An example is the free NP in (1), which, as noted above, does not fit into the preceding clause due to its case marking and to its semantic incompatibility. With regard to interactional functions, free NPs can serve various functions, such as making an assessment, as in (1). A free NP can also function as a turn increment: according to Ford et al. (2002:17), a free NP can serve as an increment after a point of possible completion and extend the prior action instead of starting a new turn. Free NPs used as turn increments are not interpretable as syntactically integrated continuations or syntactic constituents of the immediately prior turn. As turn increments, they look backward in the discourse. Finally, a free NP can also serve to organize the subsequent discourse by introducing a new topic. In conversational data, prosodic cues may be used to mark free NPs as units separate from the previous or following utterance (pitch reset, pausing, change in rhythm etc.; cf. Ford et al. 2002:32–33). Here I examine the grammatical, prosodic and interactional features of free NPs as criteria for unithood.

This article is structured as follows: in Section 2 I introduce the data. In Section 3 I discuss the syntactic features of free NPs, while Section 4 deals with the analysis of the prosodic features of free NPs and Section 5 with their interactional functions. Section 6 consists of a concluding discussion.

2. Data

The data for this study come from recordings of everyday conversations between family and friends. The data were obtained from the Arkisyn database of modern conversational Finnish (Arkisyn), which has been compiled at the University of Turku. From the conversational data, free NPs from three different recordings

have been extracted for closer study. The total number of free NPs in the data is 105.

So-called dislocations have sometimes been discussed as free NPs (see e.g. Ono & Thompson 1994; Helasvuo 2001; Laury & Helasvuo 2016). From a narrowly grammatical perspective they are not grammatically part of the clause, but at the same time, they are not independent of it either. Consider Example (2).

(2) SaPu 119

Mirva: *ne o iha sairaa hiano-i ne biisi-t.*
 they.NOM be.3SG quite sickly great-PL.PAR they.NOM song-PL.NOM
 ‘they are quite awesome those songs.’

In (2), the left-dislocated NP *ne biisit* (‘those songs’) is not part of the preceding clause in a strict sense. However, it is not totally free of it either: the preceding clause contains a coreferential pronoun *ne*, and the dislocated NP appears right after the clause. Prosodically, it is linked to the clause. The same data used for the present study also included seven left dislocations and eight right dislocations; these have been excluded from the data set.

The free NPs were further analyzed in terms of morphosyntactic and semantic features, referential properties and prosodic features.¹ The free NPs were coded for the case marking of the NP. I also analyzed the interactional functions of the free NPs in their sequential contexts, such as making an assessment or request (see Section 5).

A smaller subset of the data ($N=45$) was analyzed with respect to prosodic features. Both auditory and acoustic prosodic analyses were conducted to determine whether there were prosodic boundaries related to the free NPs. The data were first analyzed auditorily, after which an acoustic analysis was carried out with the Praat software package (Boersma & Weenink 2019). The data were coded (i) for the intonation contour of the unit containing the free NP (falling, rising, or level); (ii) for the occurrence of a pause or (iii) speaker change after the free NP; and (iv) if the same speaker continued, for the occurrence of a pitch reset.

We will now turn to the analysis of the data. First we will discuss the morphosyntactic features (Section 3), then prosodic analysis (Section 4) and finally the interactional functions (Section 5) of the free NPs.

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3. Morphosyntactic features of free NPs

Finnish is a language with a rich morphology. It has extensive inflection on both verbal and nominal categories. Each member of the clause is inflected in a form identifying its function in the clause, and even uninflected forms (e.g. particles) show their syntactic function in the clause through the absence of inflection. Together with other morphological processes, such as verbal agreement morphology, case is used to indicate whether an NP is or is not part of a clause. Most nominal modifiers and determiners precede their heads and agree with them in case and number, thus marking the NP as a unit of its own. We could say that morphosyntactic features, together with semantics, are crucial in determining the status of an NP as a clausal constituent or a free NP. In this section, I first give an overview of the morphosyntactic features of the free NPs in the data (Table 1), followed by a more detailed discussion of the findings.

Table 1. Case and number of the free NP

Case of free NP	Number				Total	
	Singular		Plural		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Nominative	67	79.8	12	57.1	79	75.2
Partitive	12	14.3	7	33.3	19	18.1
Elicative	0	0	2	9.5	2	1.9
Nominative + locative	5	6.0	0	0	5	4.8
Total	84	≈ 100	21	≈ 100	105	100
% of total		80.0		20.0		100

As we see in Table 1, the majority of free NPs are in the nominative (75.2% or 79/105; cf. (1) above). In the light of previous research, this is not surprising: it has been shown that in conversational data, the nominative is by far the most common case for NPs (Helasvuo 1997). In the Finnish case system, the nominative is the base form; unlike other case forms, it has no case suffix. Nominative NPs can serve various syntactic functions: they function as subjects, but in a transitive clause without a nominative subject the object sometimes takes the nominative. As Helasvuo (2001) has suggested, the nominative is a true subject marking case only in the case of personal pronouns. In addition to these clause core functions, a nominative can also serve as a free NP. The second largest group consists of partitive NPs (18.1% or 19/105; see (3) below). In the Finnish case system, the partitive belongs to the so-called “grammatical cases” marking the grammatical relations of

the clause core, such as direct objects. It is, *inter alia*, used to express partial or indefinite quantity (cf. Examples (3) and (7) below; for the uses of the partitive case, see Huumo 2013; Huumo & Helasvuo 2015). Finally, there are two free NPs in the relative (a case indicating movement away from something) and five that are formed by a nominative NP combined with a locative phrase (either an NP in one of the locative cases or an adpositional phrase). In the last-mentioned group, the locative phrase serves to predicate something about the referent of the nominative NP (see (4) below).

Table 1 also shows that the majority of free NPs (84/105 or 80.0%) are in the singular. In order to interpret these findings we need to compare them to the overall frequencies. Thus, the percentage of singular free NPs needs to be compared to the overall percentage of singular NPs out of all NPs. In the Arkisyn database as a whole, this percentage is 84.8% (69365 singular nouns out of a total of 81778 nouns). The percentage of singular NPs is thus somewhat higher in the data-set as a whole than it is in the subset of free NPs. Among partitive free NPs, plurals are fairly common (7/19 or 33.3%; see Example (2)). Compared to partitive NPs in the Arkisyn database in general, plurals are more common among free NPs: 27.8% of the partitive NPs in the database as a whole are in the plural.² It is important to note, however, that the raw numbers for partitive free NPs are too low to allow for any definitive conclusions. The current data indicate that in terms of morphological features (case, number), free NPs follow fairly closely the overall tendencies observed in the larger database.

It is also worth pointing out that out of the 15 cases in Finnish, only a few are used in free NPs. Of the eight different locative cases, only inessive and illative were found in the free NPs in the present data, neither were any of the three marginal cases, comitative, instructive and abessive. Of the grammatical cases, the accusative and the genitive were not found in the data. However, it cannot be ruled out that some of these cases could be used in free NPs; they just did not appear in our data.

The following Example (3) illustrates the syntactic independence of free NPs. Alina is talking about her day at work; she has a summer job selling ice-cream at a kiosk. Prior to this excerpt, Alina has told a story about what had happened to her at the kiosk the previous day: in talking about the weather and its effect on sales, she had accidentally attributed the good rate of sale to the fact that “the ice-cream is shining” when she was obviously trying to say that ice-cream sales go up when the sun is shining. The story has been received with joint laughter, and Alina continues:

2. Search carried out in February 2017.

(3) SaPu 119

- 1 Alina: *mä ajattel-i et jos sä ol-isi ol-lus*
 1SG.NOM think-PST.1SG COMP if 2SG.NOM be-COND.2SG be-PCP
siin.
 there
 ‘I thought if you had been there’
- 2 Netta: *hei mä ol-isi kual-lu.*
 hey 1SG be-COND.1SG die-PCP
 ‘hey, I would have died’
- 3 Alina: *tai sää ni huh huh. ha ha .hhh*
 or 2SG SO PTC PTC
 ‘or you like oh boy. ((laughter))’
- 4 (1.5)
- 5 Alina: *tomss-i PERusmok-i-i.*
 DEM.ADJ-PL.PAR basic-mistake-PL-PAR
 ‘those kinds of basic mistakes.’
- 6 (5.0)
- 7 Mirva: *on-k-s tei-l kamera?*
 be-Q-CL 2PL-ADE camera
 ‘Do you have a camera?’

In the excerpt given in (3), Alina considers possible alternative scenarios of what might have happened had her friends been present to witness her mistake (lines 1–3), and after a considerable pause (1.5 seconds), she ends up with an assessment (line 5). This assessment takes the form of a free NP, which has a demonstrative adjective functioning as the modifier of the head noun *perusmökii* ‘basic mistakes’. The modifier agrees with the head in case (partitive) and number (plural). Because of its form (case marking, number) and its semantics, it is clear that the NP cannot be part of the preceding clause. After the free NP (line 5), there is a long pause (5.0), after which Mirva opens up a new topic by posing a question (line 7).

The free NP (Example (3), line 5) thus serves to make an assessment about the incident Alina has just described. With the plural marking of the NP, however, Alina indicates that the assessment is not only about the mistake she has just told the co-participants about, but about something else as well. Before the sequence given in (3), Netta has just contributed to the conversation with two stories. Similarly to (3), Netta’s stories are about awkward incidents at work caused by verbal slips. The free NP in (3) serves to make an assessment about Alina’s incident but the plural marking of the free NP indicates that the assessment could be understood as relating more generally to the stories by Netta before.

Another option for such an assessment would be to use a copula clause, which in Finnish are formed with a subject, a copula verb (*olla* ‘be’) and a predicate nominal. Using a copula clause the speaker would thus need to choose a referring expression that would function as the subject of the copula clause. In Example (3), what the assessment is about, however, is quite vague and elusive: in some sense, it is the events described in the previous stories, but Alina may just be assessing what she herself has done as belonging to the category of basic mistakes. Unlike for example a copula clause, the free NP provides a grammatical resource for making an assessment without having to refer to what is being assessed.

In Example (4) we have a free NP combined with a locative phrase. The participants in this conversation are preparing to go to a rock festival the following day. Before the sequence given in (4), the participants have been talking about how to dress for the event. Before the recording, the participants have been out shopping for new clothes.

(4) SaPu 119

- 1 Anni: *toi o oikee hyvä.*
 DEM.NOM be.3SG really good.NOM
 ‘that’s really great.’
- 2 (Alina): ((laughter))
- 3 (0.3)
- 4 Alina: [*KIITTI.*]
 thanks
 ‘thanks.’
- 5 Netta: [*sii-he*] *joku paita pääl.*
 it-ILL some.NOM shirt.NOM top-ADE/ALL
 ‘(you can put) some shirt on top of it.’
- 6 (0.4)
- 7 Anni: *on.*
 be.3SG
 ‘it is.’
- 8 Netta: *sitte ku tule-e kylmä.*
 then when become-3SG cold.NOM
 ‘when it gets cold.’

In (4), Anni is complimenting Alina on her new outfit (line 1). After Alina’s response (line 4; the laughter in line 2 may also be by Alina), Anni reinforces her compliment by repeating the finite verb of the complimenting clause (line 7). Overlapping with Alina’s response, Netta offers a piece of advice (line 5), which she further specifies (line 8). The advice given in line 5 is formulated with a nom-

inative NP (*joku paita* ‘some shirt’) combined with two locative phrases (*siihe* ‘to it’ and *pääl* ‘on top’). The demonstrative *siihe* ‘to it’ is coreferential with the demonstrative *toi*, roughly translatable as ‘that’ (line 1). There is no clausal construction in the context that this NP + locative phrase construction could be part of. The construction contains no verbal element, but in its absence, the locative phrases serve to predicate something about the nominative NP: there could be a shirt on top of it, but it is not specified how (most likely Netta herself would put it on, but this is not explicated in the linguistic form). The locative phrases both indicate direction towards something, but referentially they are quite vague. Helasvuo (2001: 123–125) has suggested that in constructions like the one in (4), the case-marking functions similarly to a predicate which takes the free NP as its argument (cf. Siro 1964 on case endings as “quasipredicates”).

In their article on free NPs (unattached NPs) in English, Ono and Thompson (1994) discuss a similar example: here the free NP + locative phrase construction is a directive *no kids on the balcony*, where the adpositional phrase *on the balcony* serves to give a spatial orientation concerning the referent of the NP *kids*. In the absence of a predicate verb, the exact relationship between the NP and the adpositional phrase is left to be inferred: whether kids are not allowed to go out on the balcony, or whether they should not linger there. The construction may also be used simply to state a fact: ‘there are no kids on the balcony’. In a sense, this construction has been crystallized and functions as a prohibitive directive. At the same time, however, the free NP + locative phrase is a fully productive construction type, which can be used as a template to produce new constructions (e.g. *no smoking on premises*, *no drinking on the job*). In other terms, it functions like a prefab (cf. Erman & Warren 2000). Voronov (forthcoming) provides another example from Russian: *doloj tiraniyu* [away tyranny-ACC] ‘away (with) tyranny’, where *doloj* is a locative adverb and the free NP is in the accusative, marking ‘tyranny’ as the goal of the action while the action itself (doing away with something) is not explicated. It is interesting to note that the Finnish data contain no free NPs in the accusative case,³ although the construction is perfectly acceptable in other languages. In German, for example, a request can be made using a free NP in the accusative case: *einen Kaffee, bitte* ‘one coffee (ACC), please’ (cf. Voronov forthcoming).

Summing up: in a language like Finnish, with rich morphological marking, morpho-syntactic features together with the semantic content turn out to be crucial in distinguishing whether an NP is part of a clause or a free NP. In addition to case marking, free NPs express number (singular vs. plural). Free NP constructions are grammatically quite frugal or minimal, and leave a great deal to be

3. This applies not only to the data studied here but also to those dealt with in Helasvuo (2001).

inferred: a free NP may be used to characterize a referent without having to refer explicitly to the referent being characterized (cf. Example (3); on the interactional functions of free NPs, see Section 5). Free NP + locative phrase constructions may be used to predicate a location somewhere, or movement towards somewhere or from somewhere, without having to explicate the kind of movement implicated. In (4), for example, it is predicated that a shirt will go on top of the outfit, but the precise manner in which this will occur is not explicated. Thus, free NPs as a grammatical resource are characterized by their frugal or minimal grammar, and it is precisely this feature that can be exploited for interactional purposes. They also exhibit interesting prosodic characteristics, which we will turn to next.

4. Prosodic features of free NPs

Ford et al. (2002: 32–33) note that prosodic cues may be used to mark free NPs as separate units. They mention pitch reset, pausing and changes in rhythm as possible cues. In the present study, prosodic features of free NPs were studied in order to determine whether they support the analysis of free NPs as independent units. Features taken into account included pauses, speaker change, changes in voice quality and volume, pitch reset and intonation contour. We may note that speaker change is not a prosodic feature as such but a speaker change always entails a prosodic change. All of these features contribute to prosodic chunking in conversational interaction (cf. Aho 2010 on prosodic chunking in spoken Finnish and in Swedish spoken in Finland; for prosodic boundaries and chunking see Cruttenden 1986; Bruce 2005).

In the present study, the prosodic analysis was based on an auditory analysis, supplemented by an acoustic analysis carried out with the Praat software (Boersma & Weenink 2019). The acoustic analysis was sometimes unreliable due to overlap or background noise. To ensure the reliability of the prosodic analysis, these cases had to be excluded from it. As prosodic analysis is very time-consuming, it was applied to only a subset of the data ($N = 45$). The free NPs were chosen so that they formed a representative sample of the morphosyntactic features discussed in Section 3 and the different interactional functions identified in Section 5.

The analysis shows that in the vast majority of cases there was a clear prosodic boundary either before or after the free NP, marked by speaker change, coherent intonation contour of the free NP (falling, rising or level),⁴ pause either before or

4. Intonation contour refers to the auditory shape of a prosodic unit based on intonation and terminal junctures (Cruttenden 1986: 45–46, Chafe 1987; for Finnish: Aho 2010). It has been

after the free NP, pitch reset, and/or change in voice quality in the free NP. Only pauses longer than micropause (0.3 seconds or longer) were considered. When analyzing the data, these features were coded independent from each other. This means that a given free NP could exhibit multiple features. Table 2 summarizes the findings concerning prosodic boundary markers.

Table 2. Prosodic boundary markers associated with free NPs

Boundary marker	N (of 45)	% of cases
Coherent intonation contour of the free NP	45	100
– <i>Falling intonation contour</i>	31	
– <i>Rising intonation contour</i>	7	
– <i>Level intonation contour</i>	7	
Speaker change	41	91
– <i>Before the free NP</i>	26	
– <i>After the free NP</i>	34	
– <i>Both before and after</i>	19	
Pause	30	67
– <i>Before the free NP</i>	17	
– <i>After the free NP</i>	24	
– <i>Both before and after</i>	11	
Pitch reset	7	16
Change in voice quality	1	2

Table 2 shows that all free NPs are uttered under a coherent intonation contour, encompassing the free NP either alone or together with certain particles or conjunctions (cf. Example (5), line 14). Among the different intonation contours, falling contours were most common (31 cases). There were 7 cases with level intonation and 7 with rising intonation. In the literature, level intonation has been defined as a marker of continuation (see e.g. Chafe 1988:10). Thus, level intonation may be used to indicate that there is more to come. At the same time, however, it marks the boundary of a prosodic unit (intonation unit) in Finnish

customary in studies of spoken Finnish (in both traditional dialectological and more modern interactional studies) to distinguish between three major terminal contours: falling, rising and level (see e.g. Seppänen 1997:22–23). Level terminal contour has been noted to indicate continuation. Even though it may signal continuation, it nevertheless indicates a boundary of a prosodic unit.

(Helasvuo 2001: 137). Speaker change is a common boundary marker for free NPs (41 cases in total, cf. Examples (2), (4), (5) and (6)). In 26 cases speaker change occurred preceding the free NP, and in 34 cases following it. In 19 cases, these overlapped, i.e., speaker change occurred both before and after.⁵ Also common is pausing in connection with the free NP: 17 cases involved a pause before the free NP, 24 cases had one after it. In 11 cases these markers occurred simultaneously, i.e., a pause occurred both before and after the free NP. There were only a couple of cases with pitch reset, and only one with a change in voice quality. Many cases involved multiple boundary markers: for example speaker change combined with pausing, as in (2) and in (5) below.

Example (5) illustrates prosodic boundaries. It is from the same conversation as in (4) where the participants are discussing an upcoming rock festival. During this excerpt Netta is going over the program listing the different bands that will be playing at the festival the next day.

(5) SaPu 119

- 1 Netta: *mitäköhä menee sit joskus pual seiska' aikaa,*
 what-PAR-Q-CLT go-3SG then sometime half seven-GEN time-ILL
 'what's on then around six thirty'
- 2 *thö_Sikstinain_Ais.*
 NAME.NOM
 'The 69Eyes (name of a Finnish rock band).'
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 Alina: *öäh.*
 PTC
 'yuck.'
- 5 Netta: *Hanoi_Roks.*
 NAME.NOM
 'Hanoi Rocks (name of a Finnish rock band).'
- 6 Anni: *nii.*
 PTC
 'Yeah.'
- 7 Mirva: =*miks noi o-*
 why DEM be
 'Why are those -'

5. In other words, the numbers for 'before' not only include cases where there was a speaker change only before the free NP but also cases where there was a speaker change both before and after the free NP. Likewise for pauses.

- 8 Netta: =*See Äm Äks*,
 NAME.NOM
 ‘CMX (name of a Finnish rock band)’
- 9 (0.4)
- 10 Mirva: *haluu-ks Anni men kattoo See Äm Äksä?°*
 want.2SG/3SG-Q-CLT NAME go.INF watch-INF NAME.ACC
 ‘Does Anni want to go to see CMX?’ [Or: ‘Do you Anni want to go to see CMX?’]”
- 11 Anni: [*no ei*] *välttämätt op pakko*.
 PTC NEG necessarily be.CONNEG compulsory
 ‘Not necessarily.’
- 12 Netta: [*°Arkki,°*]
 NAME.NOM
 ‘The Ark. (name of a Swedish rock band)’
- 13 Mirva: *mikä?*
 what.NOM
 ‘What?’
- 14 Netta: *Arkki ja*,
 NAME.NOM and
 ‘The Ark and’
- 15 Alina: *yäk. siis mää oli niim pettynyv viime vuan siihe*
 PTC PTC 1SG be-1SG so disappoint-PCP last year DEM-ILL
Arkkii.
 NAME-ILL
 ‘Yuck. I was so disappointed at the Ark last year.’

In Example (5), Netta is reading out loud the names of the different performers playing the next day. The names are produced as free NPs (lines 2, 5, 8, 12 and 14), each one forming an intonation unit of its own, except for the last one, *Arkki ja* ‘The Ark and’ (line 14); here the free NP is combined with the conjunction *ja* ‘and’, which together form an intonation unit. The free NPs form a list, and each member of the list is followed by either a pause (as in lines 3 and 9), a response particle (lines 6 and 15), or both (lines 3–4). The free NPs are followed by speaker change. Each free NP is thus followed by several markers for prosodic boundaries.

Thus, the prosodic analysis shows that free NPs usually show clear prosodic boundaries. Multiple boundary markers were also present in many cases. I will discuss possible interdependences between the prosodic boundary markers and the interactional functions in the next section.

5. Interactional functions of free NPs

The interactional functions of free NPs have been discussed in some previous studies. Ono and Thompson (1994) focused on unattached NPs at a specific turn constructional environment, namely at the ends of turns. Based on their data from American English conversation, they found that at the ends of turns, unattached NPs tend to be used to assess, evaluate, summarize, label and classify. Ford et al. (2002) discuss turn increments in American English conversation. They note that increments which are extensions of the preceding turn function as constituents of the clause in that turn, and as such continue the action of that turn, while increments which are free constituents – either unattached NPs or other free constituents – initiate an action of their own and serve to display an assessment and stance towards a referent mentioned in the prior turn (Ford et al. 2002: 18, 30).⁶ All of these interactional functions occur in the Finnish data as well, along with many others.

Table 3 gives a rough overview of the various interactional functions performed by the free NPs in the present data. It is important to note that, unlike coding for example for the case of the free NP (cf. Table 1), coding for interactional function can yield varying results depending on the analyst. The main point in Table 3 is to show the variety of interactional functions free NPs serve and to indicate which functions are most frequent.

Table 3 shows that free NPs are most often used to categorize referents (cf. Ono & Thompson 1994 on classifying free NPs in American English). They are also often used in characterizing functions, for instance by making positive or negative assessments about referents in the conversation (see also Helasvuo 2001: 117–123). This is a function identified by Ford et al. (2002: 18) as an interactional function of free NPs in turn increments in American English. It is also fairly common to use free NPs to offer candidate understandings, i.e. interpretations co-participants may offer of what a speaker has just said (see Antaki 2012: 531; Heritage 1984: 319). Free NPs may also be used to confirm or disambiguate referents (cf. Tao 1996: 93 on free NPs which reinforce a referent in Mandarin). All of these functions look backward in the discourse, relating to something in the previous interaction. There are certain functions, however, which serve to initiate something new in the interaction, and are thus forward-looking. These include making requests, predicating something on a theme, or introducing a new topic (cf. Tao 1996: 85). Interestingly, introducing a new topic was identified as the most common function of free NPs in Tao's Mandarin data (see Tao 1996: 84); in

6. Ford et al. (2002: 25–30) do not include right-dislocations in their discussion of free NP extensions (unattached NP extensions in their terminology; cf. our discussion on Example (2)).

Table 3. Interactional functions of free NPs

Function	N	%
<i>Backward-looking</i>		
– Characterizing	23	21.9
– Categorizing	33	31.4
– Confirming	5	4.8
– Offering a candidate understanding	15	14.3
<i>Forward-looking</i>		
– Making a request	9	8.6
– Predicating on a theme	6	5.7
– Introducing a new topic	7	6.7
– Vocative	2	1.9
<i>Idiom</i>	5	4.8
Total	105	100%

the Finnish data, in contrast, it was not particularly common, as can be seen in Table 3. Free NPs can also be used as vocatives, but as can be seen in Table 3, however, this use is not particularly common in Finnish.

The analysis presented in Table 3 can be compared to the findings of Ono and Thompson (1994) regarding free NPs (or “unattached NPs”, in Ono and Thompson’s terminology) in American English conversational interaction. They identified two major functions of free NPs: referential and predicating (Ono & Thompson 1994: 403). Under “predicating” free NPs they include functions such as assessing, characterizing, classifying (similar to our “characterizing” and “categorizing” function; cf. Table 3 above). Referential free NPs function in the “negotiation of referents which will be tracked in the ensuing discourse”. This characterization could be linked to our functions “confirming”, “offering a candidate understanding” and “introducing a new topic”, maybe perhaps also “making a request”. Ono and Thompson (1994: 407) further note that it is the predicating free NPs that predominate in the data, as 80% of the free NPs in their data served predicating functions. This tendency can be seen in the Finnish data also, though but not to such great extent: if the functions of “characterizing”, “categorizing”, and “predicating on a theme” are combined and classified as “predicating free NPs”, this amounts to 59% (62/105) of the data.

Ono and Thompson (1994) further found in their American English data a prosodic skewing related to the interactional functions of the free NPs. The majority of free NPs (70%) identified as serving predicating functions had final

intonation contours (Ono & Thompson 1994: 410). Assuming that their final intonation corresponds to our falling intonation contour, it can be noted that in the Finnish data, predicating free NPs (i.e. “characterizing”, “categorizing” and “predicating on a theme”) had falling intonation contour slightly more often (73% of the time) than in the American English data studied by Ono and Thompson (1994). Free NPs that served to make requests often carried a rising intonation contour, but this was not always the case.

Example (6) illustrates a free NP which serves a characterizing function by making an assessment. The participants have been discussing recipes for home-made cherry liqueur. Just prior to the sequence shown in (6), one of the participants, Varpu, has been talking about two different recipes she has been experimenting with. In one of them the cherry pits have to be crushed, in the other they are just left as they are.

(6) SaPu 117

- 1 Päivi: *se on-ki erikois-t niinku ajatel*
 DEM.NOM be.3SG-CLI strange-PAR like think.INF
 ‘it sure is funny to think’
- 2 *et mi-tä siä kirsika-n siemene-s sit muka*
 COMP what-PAR there cherry-GEN seed-INE then as.if
 ‘what there in the cherry pit’
- 3 *[voi ol-la sellas-t mi-l om merkitys-t]*
 can.3SG be-INF DEM.ADJ-PAR REL-ADE be.3SG meaning-PAR
 ‘there could be that means something’
- 4 Varpu: *[↑nii-i mitä siin voi ol]*
 PTC what-PAR there can.3SG be.INF
 ‘yeah, what could there be?’
- 5 Päivi: *jonku mau-n kannalt*
 some.GEN taste-GEN with.respect.to
 ‘in terms of taste’
- 6 *[luuli-s et se maistu-u]*
 think-COND.3SG COMP DEM taste-3SG
 ‘(you) would think it [would] taste’
- 7 Varpu: *[nii sanom muu-ta]*
 PTC say.IMP.2SG other-PAR
 ‘yeah, that’s right.’
- 8 Päivi: *vaam paha-lt ei kirsika-lt ainakaa,*
 just bad-ABL NEG.3SG cherry-ABL at.all
 ‘just bad, not like cherry at all.’

- 9 Varpu: *joku semnen kitkerä maku.*
 some.NOM DEM.ADJ.NOM bitter.NOM taste.NOM
 ‘some bitter taste.’
- 10 Päivi: *nii-i. (0.5) maistu-u sit enemmän viina-lt.*
 PTC taste-3SG then more booze-ABL
 ‘Yeah. It tastes more of booze.’
- 11 Varpu: *hehehe se-pä.*
 DEM-CLT
 ‘((Laughter)) That’s it.’
- 12 Päivi: *se-pä. viina om paha-m makus-ta.*
 DEM-CLT booze be.3SG bad-GEN taste.ADJ-PAR
 ‘That’s it. Booze tastes bad.’

In (6), the participants are considering what difference it would make to the taste of the cherry liqueur if the cherry pits were crushed (lines 1–5). In lines 6 and 8, Päivi makes an assessment concerning the taste. She refers to the liqueur by the demonstrative *se* (line 6). Varpu responds to the assessment in line 9, with a free NP *joku semnen kitkerä maku* ‘some sort of bitter taste’. The free NP may characterize the liqueur or the special flavor the pit brings to it, but this is left open. The free NP is in the base form, the nominative, and therefore does not fit in with the preceding syntactic construction (*se maistuu vaam pahalt ei kirsikalta ainakaa* ‘it would just taste bad, not like cherry at all’, lines 6 and 8) where the characterizing phrase is in the ablative case as required by the verb *maistuu* ‘taste’ (l. 6). Päivi responds to this with the particle *niiin*, which expresses agreement with Varpu’s assessment, followed by an elaboration (Sorjonen 2001: 181–185), where Päivi recycles parts of her own previous utterance in lines 6 and 8. It is interesting to note that while the free NP (l. 9) leaves it open whether it is the liqueur or the special flavor of the pit that is being assessed, the following assessment (l. 10), despite its clausal form (finite verb *maistuu* ‘tastes’) does not have an expressed subject, thus leaving the question open of what it is that ‘tastes’. In recycling parts of her own utterance (l. 6 and 8), Päivi does not recycle the subject *se* ‘it’, referring to the pit. From the content of the recycled clause we can infer that Päivi is no longer talking about the taste of the pit, but about the drink itself. In line 11, Varpu gives an aligning response by laughing and saying *sepä*; this is the nominative form of the demonstrative *se*, ‘it’, combined with a clitic particle, roughly translatable as ‘that’s it’. Päivi recycles the demonstrative and adds a further assessment, building on her earlier assessment about the taste in line 10. While in line 10 the co-participant has to infer from the content of the utterance that it is the drink Päivi is assessing, in line 12 this is made explicit. In sum, Example (6) contains an assessment sequence of which the free NP (l. 9) is part. In this it differs from

Examples (1) and (3); these also contain free NPs serving to make an assessment, but the assessments (Example (1) line 6, and Example (3) line 5) are not responding to a previous assessment, nor are they followed by further ones.

In the data, characterizing free NPs often include a characterizing adjectival modifier, such as *kitkerä* ‘bitter’ in Example (6), but not necessarily: the characterization may be embedded in the lexical semantics of the head (cf. Example (3)).

The largest group in the data, with 33 cases, consists of categorizing free NPs. Under categorizing I have included free NPs which label or name a referent, as in (5), where the speaker was listing the bands performing at the rock festival. Example (7) illustrates another kind of categorizing free NP. Netta is telling the others about an incident that happened while she was babysitting two children.

(7) SaPu 119

- 1 Netta: *mä niinku puhu-i-m popkorne-i-sta? nii-l laps-i-lle,*
 1SG PTC speak-PST-1SG popcorn-PL-ELA DEM.PL-ALL kid-PL-ALL
 ‘I was talking about popcorn to those kids,’
- 2 *mä ol-i, se ol-i aika väsynyp päivä taas?*
 1SG be-PST.3SG DEM be-PST.3SG quite tired day again
 ‘I was-, it was again a pretty tired day’
- 3 *sit mää vaa niinku selit-i vaik kui kaua*
 then 1SG just PTC explain-PST.1SG just how long
 ‘then I just like explained on and on,’
- 4 *Enii ne kokporni-t o iha sairaa hyvi-i*
 PTC DEM.PL NONCE.WORD-PL be.3SG just sick.GEN good-PL.PAR
 ‘Those *kokpornis*⁷ are just awesome.’
- 5 *et joo ne o niinko kokporne-j-a£,*
 COMP PTC DEM.PL be.3SG PTC NONCE.WORD-PL-PAR
 ‘(I mean,) yeah they are *kokpornis*,’
- 6 *sit ne ol-i mi-tä, (0.8)*
 then DEM.PL be-PST.3SG what-PAR
 ‘Then they were like, What?’
- 7 *Enii siis ↑POPkorne-j-a£.hhh*
 PTC PTC popcorn-PL-PAR
 ‘So (I mean) popcorn.’
- 8 All: ((laughter))
- 9 Alina: *no hei mä ol-i asiakkaan mä e-n tiä,*
 PTC PTC 1SG be-PST.1SG customer-GEN 1SG NEG-1SG know.CONNEG
 ‘But hey, I was (with) a customer, I don’t know,’

- 10 *mä ehkä joilleki varmaa tei-st kerro-i-n-ki jo,*
 1SG maybe some.PL-ALL certainly 2PL-ELA tell-PST-1SG-CLT already
 ‘I maybe already told about this to some of you’

In (7), Netta is describing a personal experience. She uses reported speech in her narration: in lines 4–5 she reports what she said to the children, and then in line 6 how the children had responded to her (*mitä* ‘what’). Line 7 reports her own response to the children. The free NP in the response, *POPkorneja* (line 7) is preceded by two particles *nii siis* which mark the response as a self-repair. According to Laakso and Sorjonen (2010), the particle *siis* when used as a repair initiator projects that the speaker is about to specify or explain something. In the free NP utterance in line 7, Netta is explaining to her puzzled recipients what she had meant by *kokporneja* (lines 4 and 5).

Example (8) illustrates free NPs which provide confirmation. Here the participants are in a restaurant, and the waitperson has come to take orders. Before this excerpt, Jatta has already ordered ice-cream.

(8) SaPu 117

- 1 Waitperson: *sit o viel suklaa kinuski ja*
 then be.3SG still chocolate caramel and
mansikka-kastikke-i-ta
 strawberry.sauce-PL-PAR
 ‘then there are still chocolate, caramel and strawberry sauces’
- 2 *ni halua-t-ko jonku siihen.*
 PTC want-2SG-Q some.ACC DEM-ILL
 ‘would you like some for it?’
- 3 Jatta: *no# öö kinuski,*
 PTC caramel
 ‘Well, caramel.’
- 4 Waitperson: *kinuski,*
 caramel
 ‘Caramel.’
- 5 (1.0)
- 6 Waitperson: *mm,*
 PTC
 ‘Mhm.’

7. *Kokporni* is a spoonerism based on *popkorni* ‘popcorn’. *Kokporni* does not have any obscene meaning in Finnish.

- 7 Päivi: >*mä kuuntel-i vähä huonosti*< *sen*
 1SG listen-PST.1SG a.little badly DEM-ACC
lohikeittojutun,
 salmon-soup-thing-ACC
 ‘I didn’t listen to the salmon soup thing carefully [lit. I listened
 to the salmon soup thing a little badly]’

In (8), the waitperson asks about possible side orders to the ice-cream (lines 1–2). Jatta chooses one from the presented list of three (line 3), and the waitperson confirms the order with a free NP (line 4). After a 1.0 pause, she turns to the other members of the party to take their orders.

Free NPs provide a grammatical resource for candidate understandings. In the classic interpretation, a candidate understanding can be used to check what an earlier speaker had intended by his/her turn, and invite the earlier speaker to confirm or disconfirm the adequacy of the proposed understanding (Heritage 1984: 319). In other words, the producer of the candidate understanding seeks confirmation whether his/her understanding of the previous turn is adequate. This is illustrated in (9):

(9) SaPu 119

- 1 Alina: *me teh-tii nii-l armeija-herätys yks aamu?*
 1PL do-PASS.PST DEM.PL-ALL army-wake-up one morning
 ‘We did a army-style wake-up for them one morning.’
- 2 Anni: *ja jumppa.*
 and gymnastics
 ‘and gymnastics.’
- 3 Alina: *nii? sej jälkee?*
 PTC DEM-GEN after
 ‘Yeah, after that.’
- 4 Mirva: *armeija-jumppa vai,*
 army-gymnastics or
 ‘army gymnastics or?’
- 5 Anni: *ei.*
 NEG
 ‘No.’
- 6 Alina: *no ol-i se vähä semne, sit joku Kasper oli-*
 PTC be-PST.3SG DEM little DEM-ADJ then some NAME be-PST.3SG
 ‘Well, it was a bit like (that), then this Kasper was-’

In (9), Alina and Anni are co-telling a story about what they did when they were working as counselors for a youth camp. Alina starts with a transitive clause (line 1), which Anni extends with a coordinated NP object. Alina accepts the extension with *nii?* (line 3) but specifies that the two – the wake-up and the gymnastics – weren't simultaneous events but separate ones. Mirva offers a candidate understanding (line 4), targeted at Anni's line 2: how should *jumppa* 'gymnastics' be understood? Does the modifier *armeija-* 'army(-style)' used to modify *herätys* 'wake-up' (line 1) apply to it as well? Anni responds to the candidate understanding negatively (line 5), but in line 6, Alina gives a more non-committal response which launches a lengthy sequence explaining how things were done at the camp.

Free NPs may also serve to make requests. Couper-Kuhlen (2014) discusses requests as examples of directive-commissive actions. According to Couper-Kuhlen (2014: 631–632), a request frames a future action or activity to be performed by the recipient in the interest of the speaker. All the cases analyzed as requests in the data are requests for material actions. Requests differ from offers, which also belong to directive-commissive actions, in that an offer frames the action as one to be performed by the speaker him/herself for the benefit of the recipient. In requests, the beneficiary is the speaker her/himself. Couper-Kuhlen (2014: 638) identifies several grammatical formats used in her English data to perform directive-commissive actions, but none of the formats contain free NPs. In their study of requests at a Finnish convenience store, Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) identify both the verbal (clausal) request format and the phrasal format; the latter takes the form of a free NP. Example (10) illustrates requests. The participants have come home from shopping for clothes, and are now discussing their purchases:

(10) SaPu 119

- 1 Anni: *on-k-s toi-ki Ginast,*
 be.3SG-Q-CLT DEM-CLT NAME-ELA
 'Is that one also from Gina ((name of clothing store))?'
 2 Alina: *joo.*
 PTC
 'Yeah.'
 3 (2.0)
 4 Alina: *>sakse-t?<*
 scissors-PL
 'Scissors?'
 5 Mirva: *°mää-ki leikka eka oma.° (4.0)*
 1SG-CLT cut.1SG first own
 'I'm going to cut my own (tag) first.'

In (10), Alina is sorting out her shopping. In line 2, she responds to Anni's question, and then requests a pair of scissors using a free NP (l. 4). Mirva first gives an account for not complying to the request immediately, but then hands the requested scissors to Alina.

Free NPs may also be used to introduce new topics. Example (11) is from a series of stories about various incidents the participants have experienced at work (see Examples (3) and (7); the excerpt given in Example (7) comes right after the excerpt in Example (11)). In (11), Netta is talking about her babysitting experiences. At the start of the sequence in (11), Netta is finishing a story about the dogs belonging to the family she has been babysitting for. This story involves confusion over words: she often got confused about the dogs' names, Pipsa and Peppi, calling them "Pepsi and Pippa" instead (lines 1–3). This reminds Mirva of another story about Netta's babysitting experiences, also involving a mix-up over words. In the analysis of (11), we first focus on the free NP in line 4, which introduces a topic, and then move on to the free NPs in lines 1 and 3, illustrating free NPs used as vocatives:

(11) SaPu 119

- 1 Netta: *joo, sit mä huus-i ain, Pepsi ja Pippa,*
 PTC then I scream-PST.1SG always NAME.NOM and NAME.NOM
 'yeah, then I always called, "Pepsi and Pippa"'
- 2 *hehe se oli kauheet ku (ne oli) Pipsa ja*
 it be-PST.3SG horrible-PAR when DEM be-PST.3SG NAME and
Peppi,
 NAME
 'huh huh it was awful as they were Pipsa and Peppi'
- 3 *[£Pepsi ja Pippa£]*
 NAME.NOM and NAME.NOM
 "'Pepsi and Pippa'"
- 4 Mirva: [*ja kokporni.>*]
 and NONCE.WORD.NOM
 'and kokporni'
- 5 Netta: *eih .hhh*
 NEG
 'Oh no!'
- 6 Netta: *niin nii joo he he he,*
 PTC PTC PTC
 'Oh that one.'

- 7 Alina: *mitä?*
 what-PAR
 ‘What?’
- 8 Netta: *ku me puhu-ttii,*
 when we talk-PASS.PST
 ‘When we were talking,’
- 9 *mä niinku puhu-i-m popkorne-i-sta? niil lapsille,*
 I like talk-PST-1SG popcorn-PL-ELA those-ALL kid-PL-ALL
 ‘I talked to those kids about popcorn,’

In line 4 of (11), Mirva is initiating a new topic with the help of a free NP. It is related to the previous story, as it ties in with the same time and place (babysitting in a certain family). The free NP serves to introduce a new topic, but at the same time it initiates a pre-sequence to a new story in a series of stories about funny incidents at work. The free NP *kokporni* is a spoonerism based on the word *popcorn*. After a somewhat reluctant response by Netta, whose story it is (lines 5–6) and a response by Alina who registers as an unknowing recipient (see Terasaki 2004 [1976], Heritage 2012), Netta starts the story in line 8. In this example, the free NP by Mirva is forward-looking: it indicates that there is more to come in the interaction. The free NP invites Netta to provide yet another story, but since Mirva is a knowing recipient here, she could provide the story herself if Netta refused.

Example (11) also illustrates free NPs used as vocatives: in line 1, Netta reports on how she called the dogs with the false names: *Pepsi ja Pippa*. The original names are given in line 2, and in line 3, Netta repeats the false names in a sing-song voice imitating calling out the dogs.

In sum: free NPs serve various interactional functions. Some functions look backward in the discourse, relating to something in the previous interaction. Most commonly free NPs function to categorize or characterize referents. These are all functions that have been identified in the previous literature for different languages (see e.g. Ono & Thompson 1994; Helasvuo 2001: 117–123; Ford et al. 2002: 18). In addition, free NPs may serve to provide candidate understandings. They may also be used to confirm or disambiguate referents (cf. Tao 1996: 93 on free NPs reinforcing a referent in Mandarin). Free NPs may also be forward-looking: they serve to initiate something new in the interaction. They are used to make requests, predicate something about a theme (cf. Example (4) above), or introduce a new topic (cf. Tao 1996: 85).

6. Conclusions

We started out with a syntactic definition of free NPs: free NPs are syntactically not attached to any clause but rather form units of their own. With its rich morphological marking, Finnish provides a basis for such an approach: syntactic function is morphosyntactically encoded, allowing us to identify an NP as syntactically unattached on the basis of its morphological form and the syntagmatic relations it does or does not have. It is important to note, however, that for many languages the analysis of NPs as forming units unattached to clausal syntax cannot be based on morphological form or morphosyntactic function because these are either not marked or are marked ambiguously. Contrasting the findings on the Finnish data with for example Mandarin (Tao 1996), with almost no morphology, or with English (Ono & Thompson 1994), with very little, is therefore illuminating. Tao (1996: 79) bases his analysis of NPs as integrated vs. detached (i.e. free) on predicates: detached NPs cannot be integrated into a clause structure as core arguments of a predicate. In Mandarin, detached NPs are much more common than in Finnish, for example; this is because Mandarin is a topic-prominent language, where a topic, typically an NP, is fronted, followed by a comment (Tao 1996: 80). In a similar vein, Ono and Thompson (1994: 402) identify free NPs (in their terminology, unattached NPs) based on syntactic cues: unattached NPs are not in a grammatical relation with any predicate. In Finnish, by contrast, the cues are morphosyntactic and semantic and thus rely on the morphological form of the free NP, its syntagmatic relations with its sequential environment and the semantic content.

The analysis of the data shows that in most cases the free NP forms the syntactic unit all by itself, but that sometimes it may be combined with particles or connectives (in Example (7), *nii siis POPkorneja* 'so (I mean) popcorn'; in Example (9), *armeijajumppa vai* 'army gymnastics or'). Free NPs may also combine with locative phrases which serve to provide orientation, as in (4), (*siihe joku paita pääl* '(you can put) some shirt on top of it', lit. 'there some shirt on top'), with a free NP and a locative adverb; but the orientation may also be given in the form of a lexical NP or a combination of a locative adverb and a lexical NP (e.g. *solmu sin toiseem päähä* [knot+NOM there.to other end+ILL] 'a knot there at the other end').

The prosodic analysis demonstrates that free NPs usually show clear prosodic boundaries (cf. Example (5)). Of the 45 free NPs analyzed for prosody, the majority showed a clear prosodic boundary, signalled by speaker change, pause, pitch reset and/or change in voice quality. Of these markers, a change in voice quality was the least common. Many cases involved multiple boundary markers (e.g. speaker change and pause). Prosodic boundary markers help to make free NPs

stand out as units, but do not provide independent evidence for the analysis of an NP as a free vs. constituent of a clause.

Free NPs serve various interactional functions. In certain contexts, they are used to characterize a referent or a proposition for example by making assessments (e.g. Example (3) *tomssi perusmokii* ‘those kinds of basic mistakes’). Compared to another grammatical resource for making assessments, that of copula clauses, the free NP provides a grammatical resource for making an assessment without having to refer to what is being assessed (Examples (1), (3) and (6)). Free NPs may also serve to make a confirmation (Example (8) *valkoviiniä* ‘white wine’) or provide a candidate understanding (Example 9). These are all functions which look backward in the interaction: they operate on something already established in the discourse, for instance by manipulating already established referents or predicating about them. Free NPs, however, can also initiate something new, as in Example (11), where the free NP opens up a new topic and at the same time serves to preface a story. Free NPs may also project future actions by making a request (Example (10) *sakset* ‘scissors’).

While most of the previous literature mentions free NPs in a discussion of certain interactional tasks, such as increments (Ford et al. 2002), Tao (1996) provides an in-depth discussion of free NPs in his data from Mandarin conversation. In the Mandarin data, the most common function of free NPs was introducing a new topic (see Tao 1996: 84). In the Finnish data, in contrast, this function was not very common: fewer than 7% of free NPs were used to introduce new topics (see Table 3). Ono and Thompson (1994) discuss free NPs in American English conversational data and identify two main functions for them: referring and predicating. They note that in their data the majority of free NPs (80%) serve predicating functions. The Finnish data shows a similar tendency but to a lesser extent: 59% of the Finnish free NPs had functions that could be described as “predicating”.

Free NPs are an interesting type of linguistic unit which can be characterized using morphosyntactic, prosodic and interactional features. The analysis of free NPs in Finnish has shown how the morphosyntactic features together with semantics are crucial in determining the status of an NP as a free NP. Prosodic features assist but they do not determine what is a free NP. The comparison to literature on free NPs in other languages shows, however, that the weight of the different defining features may vary depending on the language: the most important defining features of free NPs in a language characterized by rich morphosyntactic marking, such as Finnish, are very different from those of a language such as Mandarin with hardly any morphosyntax (Tao 1996).

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Referring expressions in categorizing activities

Rethinking the nature of linguistic units for the study of interaction

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Linguistic units as traditionally conceived by linguists favor structural features and referential meanings. In this paper, we propose a new way of understanding the nature of linguistic units by analyzing the interaction of multiple semiotic resources (gestures, bodily movement, eye gaze *and* speech) in social interaction. We focus on the discursive activity of “categorizing” in different situations and in two languages, English and Mandarin Chinese. Categorizing is broadly defined as any activity that involves explicitly or implicitly classifying people or objects into types. We show that the meanings of linguistic units (including the referential) may be distorted or incomplete when forms are extracted from their contexts and analyzed in isolation. Instead, we argue that an interactional, activity-based view, focusing on the deployment of linguistic elements as part of a coordinated system of semiotic resources, will enable us to understand the nature of linguistic units in a more productive way.

Keywords: categorizing, linguistic unit, referentialism, activity, semiotic resource

1. Introduction

Traditionally, linguists have understood the stream of speech as composed of structural units at various levels – phonemes, words, intonation units – to name just a few, all of which are useful for linguistic analysis. Such units have been understood and described as symbolic constructs that are organized within a system and whose function is to refer to objects in the real world, demonstrating that *reference* has long been regarded as a primary function of linguistic units

at all levels. (See Sapir's 1925 description of the phoneme, for example.) While in philosophy, Wittgenstein (1953) tried to shift the attention from referentialism to human action, arguing for a meaning-is-action thesis, Silverstein (1976) was perhaps a more explicit critic of the traditional linguistic approach, pointing out that "[a]ll of our analytic techniques and formal descriptive machinery have been designed for referential signs" (p. 15). However, most aspects of meaning are social or indexical, a point that is often overlooked when focusing solely on linguistic units and their referential meaning. Over the past 35 years or so, there have been many studies that have furthered our understanding of how indexical meaning is deployed through both linguistic structural signs as well as through other semiotic resources such as prosody (or more broadly, "contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1992), conceptual frames (e.g., Goffman 1974; Tannen 1993), and non-referential indexes, as exemplified by Goodwin's (1996) work on "prospective indexicals," as well as Ochs et al.'s (1996) work on reference blending in physicists' lab meetings. Still, we do not have an overarching theory grounded in action that explains how linguistic units, understood to be referentially oriented, are deployed in conjunction with other resources during situated activities and how these resources function together not only to refer but also to index meanings beyond the referential such as displaying the speaker's stance.

In this paper, we focus on the activity of *categorizing* in order to explore the question of how linguistic units work together with other semiotic resources within this type of situated activity. Our findings suggest that it is necessary to include these other resources and to consider other contextual factors such as the relation between the participants, stance-taking, and politeness norms in order to understand not only indexical but also referential meanings. Essentially, we suggest that linguistic units are part of a coordinated system of semiotic resources deployed within interactional activities, and extracting such units from the system is not analytically productive.

The reason we focus on categorizing is that it is a ubiquitous activity that involves deployment of linguistic units to convey referential meaning, and with the exception of work on membership categorization analysis, there has not been much explicit focus on this kind of activity in interaction-based research. For our purposes, categorizing is defined broadly as any activity that involves explicitly or implicitly classifying (or grouping) people or objects into types. Defined as such, categorizing necessarily involves the action of referring – to the categories themselves (i.e., types) and/or to the specific entities (i.e., tokens) that are said to occupy those categories. We show that categorizing is an activity with recurrent interactional features and that this kind of activity is recognizable across situations and languages. Our analysis leads us to two points: First, as traditionally defined the construct of the linguistic unit is not entirely useful for categorizing activities

because it is based on a “*decontextualized* model” (Hester & Eglin 1997: 12; their emphasis) of reference that has allowed linguists to extract and focus primarily on only one component of meaning for analytic purposes, but such analyses distort meaning due to their partiality. Our second, related point is that rationalist theories of cognition underlie this traditional referential approach, which links the referential function to a speaker’s individual mental state and thereby misses the inherent intersubjectivity of discursive action and interaction as reflected in the categorizing activities analyzed here. In pursuing these arguments through an examination of categorizing activities, we will show how both referential and sociocultural meanings conveyed as linguistic units are integrated with other semiotic resources such as gesture, eye gaze, and bodily movements. In addition, we show that even referential meaning cannot be understood by extracting linguistic units and analyzing them in a decontextualized manner. In order to demonstrate these points, we analyze situated activities in English and Mandarin Chinese with respect to how these resources are deployed incrementally to accomplish categorizing, a fundamental activity that involves both cognitive and sociocultural elements that may manifest differently in diverse languages. Following our analysis, we return to a discussion of the construct *linguistic unit*, arguing that an interactional, activity-based view that focuses on the deployment of linguistic elements as part of a coordinated system of semiotic resources will enable us to understand the nature of linguistic units in a more productive way.

2. Key concepts and approaches to categorizing

Before launching an analysis of categorization in discourse, let us begin by reviewing some of the key concepts and approaches to categorizing that are relevant for our discussion. This review is admittedly brief as our intention is to point to two gaps in the existing research. First, although research in cognitive linguistics and psychology has moved toward an approach based in language use, the underlying theory is still grounded in rationalism and views categorization as essentially something that occurs in the mind of the individual rather than as “distributed” and grounded in discursive action (Edwards 1997). Second, although categorizing as an intersubjective activity has been discussed in interaction-based research such as conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, this has largely been limited to “membership categorization,” which essentially focuses on identity categories (Garot & Berard 2011; see Section 2.4 for a more detailed discussion of the relevant concepts). Here we take a broader approach, viewing categorizing as a fundamental type of human activity, whether it centers on humans or objects. In the end, we will advocate an approach that views categorizing as a recognizable

socially-motivated activity whereby characterizing persons or objects is performed in the service of negotiating stance and achieving participant alignment.

2.1 Cognitive approaches to categorization

Traditional approaches to categorization in linguistics and psychology have been influenced by the dominant view of reference as the prevailing function of linguistic units. For example, based on Rosch's (1978) work in psychology, categories were understood as mental representations of real world objects in which there was a prototypical member and peripheral members, and lexical units were assumed to refer transparently to these representations. Cognitive linguists such as Lakoff (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) critiqued the focus on direct representation and examined metaphor, arguing for its importance in everyday language use. Still, Edwards (1997) has pointed out that although cognitive linguistics has moved "towards the study of ordinary language," in effect, it has created a theoretical division of labor between the lexicon, which is still seen as "describ[ing] the world directly," and metaphor, which is "set aside as some kind of derived, secondary, poetic, or abnormal usage" (p.203). While arguing for their importance, he stated that, "cognitive studies still have some way to go toward dealing with category use in everyday discourse" (p.203). We add the further critique that even cognitive studies focused on metaphor often continue to rely on experimental data rather than situated interaction. For example, even though the recent work of Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011, 2013) investigated inferential, as opposed to referential, meanings, their studies are experimental and do not examine metaphor use in naturalistic contexts. We argue that the question of how people do categorizing in everyday situations that are not subject to manipulation by researchers is equally important. In our view, categorizing should also be investigated as a situated activity, in terms of how both the lexicon and metaphor, but also other semi-otic resources, are deployed.

2.2 Previous work focusing on categorizing as social action

Categorizing action in social interaction was discussed in the early work of Harvey Sacks (1972, 1992), centering on "members' categories," which as mentioned, refers to identity categories as they are deployed during interaction. Although membership categorization analysis (MCA) developed into a separate area, it was largely ignored until a recent comeback spurred by works such as Butler and Weatherall (2006), Schegloff (2007a), Fitzgerald, Housley and Butler (2009), and Stokoe (2012). These works sought to further this approach as a systematic method for analyzing social categories. Arguing that unlike other methods for

analyzing identities, MCA is a practical means for systematically examining the relevance of the proposed social categories for the *participants*, rather than just for analysts' purposes, Stokoe gives a set of guidelines and key concepts, as well as illustrative examples. We will discuss her work further in Section 2.4, before we describe our approach to data analysis.

Although we use some points from MCA in our analysis, our goal is to examine how linguistic units and other semiotic resources are deployed in the activity of categorizing, defined more broadly, to include not only "members" (or people), but also other (non-human) objects relevant to a particular interactional context. Close examination of how categories are deployed and/or how categorizing is accomplished in discourse will reveal not only social, but also cognitive aspects of categorizing (Edwards 1991, 1997), which we argue is a fundamental human activity seen across situations and languages.

2.3 Rethinking categorizing as a socially-motivated activity

Before explaining our approach in more detail, we define the more general terms *activity* and *action*. The concept of action has long been problematized in the literature in pragmatics, linguistic anthropology, and discourse and conversation analysis. Classical pragmatics had much to do with notions such as speech acts as key factors in understanding the performative nature of language use (Austin 1962; Levinson 1983). Indeed, speech act theorists proposed actions such as directives, compliments, complaints, etc., and conversation analysts expanded on speech act theory, adding the fundamental aspects of sequence and intersubjectivity through paired actions such as various types of adjacency pairs (Sacks et al. 1974), assessments (Pomerantz 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin 1987), etc. All of these notions of action have been shown to be of wide relevance across languages and cultures, but their scope has largely been limited to the utterance or turn, or to pairs of utterances.¹

In recent years, there has also been discussion of action that extends beyond the utterance level, an idea sometimes referred to as a "project" (Levinson 2013; Schegloff 2007b). Levinson (2013) recently reviewed the research concerning action, providing an overview of some of these ideas and discussing the terms that have been used in sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. As he defined it, a project is a "plan of action [or] a course of action that at least one participant is pursuing, which may at first be opaque to others then retrospectively discernible ... and then prospectively projectable" (p. 122).

1. We note that conversation analysts have discussed the idea of "expanded sequences" for quite some time. (See Schegloff 2007b.)

In essence, Levinson suggested a fluid framework, in which paired actions are a central component, and those paired actions have the potential to build into larger segments such as projects or activities that range from open-ended toward more rule-driven “action types”, depending on the setting. He also pointed out that although it has not been a traditional focus in linguistics, non-verbal action is an important (sequential) component of how this interactional work is accomplished.

We position categorizing within this fluid framework, arguing that it is a recognizable activity that participants engage in and orient to and that it has relevance both in the moment and beyond. We use the term *activity* rather than *project*, however, in order to avoid the assumption that participants necessarily follow a “plan of action” per se. Although categorizing is a recognizable activity, it is likely that it often develops spontaneously, as participants respond to one another. Thus the term *categorizing activity* is simply a useful way to describe what people are doing when they deploy semiotic resources, including what have traditionally been understood as linguistic units (e.g., noun phrases, predicates, etc.), in situations where the question of how to describe or classify persons or objects is at issue and where negotiating stance and participant alignment can be achieved through categorizing. We note that where relevant, we also use the term *action* to refer to single gestures or utterances within an activity. Using this framework, we investigate categorizing activities in several situations and in two languages, and use this evidence to argue in favor of an action-based theory of categorizing in which linguistic units are understood to be one component in a coordinated semiotic system. An important implication of understanding not only linguistic units but also the referential function in this way is that although speakers may seem to care about reference, especially when they are arguing over the meanings of words, we argue that they only orient to this concern as it is related to the ongoing actions and activity,² such as categorizing in the current case. It will be shown that categorizing is often fashioned in the service of displaying stances and achieving alignment or disalignment among participants.

2.4 Methodological tools used in MCA

Stokoe’s (2012) article focused on methods for analyzing *members’ categories*, but we find some of her points useful for analyzing how people do categorizing more generally for contrasting, defining, and classifying (both human and non-human) referents into types. The target of categorizing as we have defined it

2. Of course, this does not preclude participants using decontextualized, referential meanings (e.g., dictionary definitions) in order to accomplish other actions.

includes both what has been known as membership categorization and categorizing activities pertaining to non-human objects, be they concrete or abstract, real or hypothetical.

Focusing on gender categories, Stokoe attempted to put to rest a long-standing worry that MCA focuses on (“decontextualized”) categories of interest to the analyst, and might “become a vehicle for promiscuously introducing” (Schegloff 2007a: 476) those categories, as opposed to categories that can be shown to be relevant for the participants. In order to accomplish this task, she pointed out that although the categories themselves are sometimes explicitly mentioned using Membership Categorization Devices (e.g., *men, male, girls*, etc.), this is not always the case, and participants often accomplish the linking of a particular member to a category through implicit or indexical means. Stokoe’s work is particularly relevant to our point that the relevance and meaning (including the referential) of linguistic units such as noun phrases and predicates is built (sequentially) through multiple, often implicit actions, including both verbal and non-verbal, and is best understood by examining how these resources are deployed in an ongoing activity. Not only do her examples show that participants accomplish the linking of members to categories through sequential actions, she also suggested how linguistic forms are used systematically to accomplish such action. For example, the indefinite article is used when a participant is invoking a general category rather than a specific referent (e.g., “I’m- hard and straight. as a *male*.”) (Stokoe 2012: 289; transcription simplified and emphasis added). The category *male* is explicitly mentioned but the speaker’s membership is indexed through the “category-resonant description” *hard and straight* (p. 285). Category-resonant descriptions are defined as “attributes that ‘convey the sense... of being deployed as categories’” and include examples such as “she’s eighty-nine years old” and “don’t be so testosterone” (p. 280). Although many of her examples suggest that category-resonant descriptions are often accomplished using adjectives and other predicates that further specify the category to which they are attributed, Stokoe cautions that these forms are not always tied to a particular category “in some objective way. Rather, such category-generated features emerge in actual stretches of talk, with regard to particular states of affairs or narrative accounts” (p. 285).

A second implicit way of invoking a category is by mentioning “category-bound activities” (Sacks 1992: 249), defined as “those actions that are expectedly done by members of a particular category” (Butler & Weatherall 2006: 444). As with category-resonant descriptions, mentions of category-bound activities are typically accomplished using predicates. In the (simplified) example below the participants link the activity “game-playing” to either males or females at different points in the interaction. (G is a male and C is a female.)

1. G: I tcouldn't play !games.= [(t)
2. C: [We do.
3. G: They tdon't ga::me pl[ay,
4. C: [Girls do play. Heh
(Stokoe 2012: 288)

Although G is a member of the category “male,” which C is aware of, it is unclear at line 1 whether he is speaking as a male or simply as an individual. However, C assumes that gender is relevant here: Her line 2 utterance links game-playing to members of the “female” category through use of the pronoun *we*, a point that is then made explicit in line 4. This example, then, suggests how linguistic form and sequential order work together to do categorizing, an activity that may involve both explicit and indexical reference to the relevant categories as well as to particular members of those categories. In addition, all of the linguistic forms – referring expressions such as noun phrases, category-resonant descriptions (e.g., the predicate adjective *hard and straight*), and category-bound activities (e.g., the verb phrases focused on *playing games*) are forms that have traditionally been considered linguistic units. Thus this example illustrates well the importance of how and when these resources are deployed in that, gender categories only become apparent through the recipient’s actions in lines 2 and 4, which exhibit parallel structuring: “words and structures produced – and reproduced – by conversational co-participants” (Du Bois 2014: 360). This parallelism is noticeable in lines 1–4, as the participants repeatedly mention (*not*) *playing games* (or *game playing*), and change only the actor(s) involved (*we* and *girls* in lines 2 and 4, and *I* and *they* in lines 1 and 3). Parallelism is dependent on sequencing and would not be noticeable if utterances were considered in isolation.

3. Data and methods

In order to show crosslinguistic similarities and differences in conducting categorizing activities, we analyze two languages in this paper: English and Mandarin Chinese. The English data are drawn from two contexts: Video recordings of arguments between protestors at organized demonstrations that were posted on YouTube, and video recorded writing conferences between a teacher and student in a higher education setting. In the first case, the participants are arguing over categories that have been applied to groups of people, whereas in the second they discuss different types of essay titles, which they categorize according to function. The Mandarin Chinese data, showing a slightly different cultural slant, come from two video recorded everyday conversations among friends. The first conversation presents a case of a friendly dispute over a type of object (apartments), while in the second conversation the participants discuss categories that can be applied to

people. More details about these data excerpts will be provided as each is presented in the sections to follow.

In what follows, we will use the methodological tools discussed earlier to analyze categorizing activities involving both people and objects, with a particular focus on how people do categorizing more generally for contrasting, defining, and classifying (both human and non-human) referents into types. We specifically examine how linguistic resources, including explicit mentions of referring expressions such as noun phrases, category-resonant descriptions and/or category-bound activities (which are often predicates), and the parallel structuring associated with sequential order, are used in conjunction with nonverbal resources such as gesture, eye gaze, and bodily movements in categorizing activities in English and Mandarin Chinese.

With regard to the last point about making use of bodily resources, we wish to note that we are not attempting here to assign any fixed functions to body actions or to provide a formal mechanism to identify the meaning of such actions; we merely draw attention to this often neglected aspect of human behavior in constructing meaning through activities such as categorizing reported here.

4. Data analysis

In presenting the data from the two languages, we show that categorizing is an activity with recurrent interactional features and that this kind of activity is recognizable across situations and languages, with different cultural nuances. Our analysis also shows that categorizing should not be regarded as an individual mental activity but rather is distributed or negotiated, as it is conducted in the service of various discourse interactional functions, in particular stance-taking. Finally, our examples will also demonstrate that similar semiotic resources are used to categorize both people and objects.

4.1 English data

The first excerpt is drawn from the “Occupy Oakland” demonstration, which occurred in October 2011 in Oakland, California. This demonstration was connected to “Occupy Wall Street,” a large organized movement that held demonstrations in various cities. Protestors used the terms “the one percent” to refer to extremely wealthy members of society and “the ninety-nine percent” to refer to themselves and most other members of society, in order to highlight income

inequality. In Excerpt 1, a bystander (B)³ approaches a protester (P) and challenges the statement on the sign he is holding, “Occupy! shut down the 1%.” Much of this interaction involves B contesting the validity of the category “the one percent,” which also calls into question the *shutting down* action advocated by P.

Excerpt 1.

(“Occupy Oakland”)⁴

1 B: *facing P, shaking head slightly and pointing to the sign with left hand*
 2 .. I don't have to know any more than this.
 3 *{pointing at and touching the word 'the' on the sign}*
 4 .. shut down,
 5 *{moving left hand back-and-forth, pointing to 'shut' and then 'down'}*
 6 the one percent,
 7 *{moving left hand back-and-forth, pointing to 'the' and then '1%'}*
 8 *turning away from P, toward camera begins a sweeping gesture toward buildings*
in background with his left arm
 9 there's ninety-percent,
 10 *{sweeping gesture with left arm}*
 11 of people,
 12 *{turning back to face P}*
 13 .. ^working,
 14 *{moving his hands up and down, open-palm gesture punctuates 'working'}*
 15 in the ^city.
 16 *{moving his hands up and down, open-palm gesture punctuates 'city'}*
 17 P: *{shaking head}*
 18 B: and you're trying to shut it down. ((SPEAKING MORE RAPIDLY HERE))
 19 *{open-palm gestures}*
 20 so
 21 *{moves head upward slightly to look at sign, while raising left hand to point}*
 22 P: *{head shake}*
 23 [if the sho:e fi:ts],
 24 B: [you're not shutting] down,
 25 *{waving hand and pointing toward '1%' on the sign}*

3. Note that the term *bystander* does not refer to the participant's role within the excerpt, but rather to the fact that he was not a participant in the demonstration.

4. Transcription of the excerpts generally follows Du Bois' "Discourse Transcription 2" system <http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/projects/transcription/Ao4comparison.pdf> with the following modifications: Gestures, bodily movements, and eye gaze are italicized. In cases of overlap between gestures and talk (by the person speaking or the interlocutor), or overlapping gestures produced by both participants, the description of the gestures is enclosed in curly brackets { }, and left-aligned at the point of overlap. In the case of the Mandarin Chinese examples, some intonation units are combined in single lines so as to save space, which is also the reason that no morpheme-by-morpheme interlinear gloss is provided.

- 26 B: the one [percent-] --
 27 {leaning toward P, hands on hips}
 28 P: [put it on].
- 29 B: ... the shoe doesn't fit,
 30 {leaning toward P}
- 31 P: well [then-]
 32 {shaking head}
 33 B: [cause],
- 34 I'm part of the ninety ^perce:nt,1
 35 {pointing right hand toward his own chest}
- 36 P: I'm part of the ninety-nine.
 37 {leaning his head to the left, in shrugging gesture} ((P's FACIAL EXPRESSION SUGGESTS A "SO WHAT?" RESPONSE TO B'S UTTERANCE IN LINE 34))

Excerpt 1 illustrates the kinds of recurrent features we found when participants are doing categorizing. First, the interaction itself is a dispute centered around the contrast brought into play through explicit mention of the noun phrase *the one percent*. B approaches P and calls into question the categorization “the one percent,” initially displaying his stance through prosodic cues and gestures and then through the verbalization of *the one percent* (lines 1–6). In lines 9 and 11, he uses a category-resonant description, this time a nominal element, *ninety percent of people*, to deploy an alternative. Although this category is not referred to using the definite noun phrase “the ninety percent” until line 34, B uses other semiotic resources to accomplish categorizing actions, including contrast that is indexed through parallel linguistic structures (Du Bois 2014) and simultaneous or sequential timing of bodily and verbal actions.

With respect to the relation between contrast and parallelism, it is notable that *one* and *ninety* are not strictly complementary while *ten* and *ninety* or *one* and *ninety-nine* would be. Yet one of the inferences produced by this discrepancy is that P's proposed system for categorizing society, as divided between one percent and ninety-nine percent is too simplistic.⁵ This inference seems to come from the interactional work done by B to establish “the ninety percent” as an alternative category. Indeed, the noun phrase *the one percent* is treated as “identifiable” (Du Bois 1980) by both participants at the beginning of the excerpt, but it becomes clear that they do not agree on its meaning. On the other hand, *ninety percent* is first mentioned in lines 9 and 11, and B does the extra work of introducing it through the noun phrase *ninety percent of the people (working in the city)*, which establishes an alternative to the category “the one percent”. This category

5. B's choice of *ninety percent* to refer to people working in the city takes issue with the assumption that ninety-nine percent of the people agree with the protestors. Essentially, B is claiming that he is a member of the ninety percent who are not represented by the protestors, which also suggests that the protestors make up a minority of the population (ten percent).

is then subsequently referred to using the definite noun phrase *the ninety percent* (line 34). Du Bois (2014: 374) has argued that conversational participants' use of parallelism "invites selective attention to some aspects of potentially similar elements ..., while ignoring other aspects ...". This strategy is apparent in B's reproduction of the word *percent*, first introduced by P (on the sign) and reproduced multiple times by B (lines 6, 9, 26, and 34): In line 6, B reads *the one percent*; in line 9, he replaces *the one* with *ninety*; in lines 24 and 26, he effectively negates *the one percent* (*you're not shutting down, the one percent-*); and in line 34, he identifies with "the ninety percent," which has now been established as an identifiable alternative category. Through this incremental work, B's stance becomes clear – he accepts the idea that society can be divided up in terms of percentages, but the way P has divided it is wrong. Once the contrast in categories has been established, the participants explicitly claim their membership, B identifying as a member of "the ninety percent" (line 34) and P identifying with the actual complement of "the one percent," "the ninety-nine percent," which is not explicitly mentioned until line 37. These statements (lines 34 and 37) make explicit the different stances held by B and P with regard to how society should (or should not) deal with income inequality. Thus these noun phrases (*the one percent*, *the ninety percent*, and *the ninety-nine percent*) do not just accomplish simple reference; rather, the way they are positioned within the interaction conveys a large part of the meaning, which reflects the interlocutors' different positions on larger societal issues. In other words, reference in context can only be understood as a composite of the semiotic resources, including linguistic units, used in conjunction with one another and positioned with respect to sequential order.

The fact that nonverbal features such as gestures or bodily movement are important in categorizing is also apparent in Excerpt 1. Some of these actions are paired with the talk, occurring simultaneously, as in lines 4–5 (shown in Figure 1), 6–7, 13–14, 15–16, 34–35, and 36–37. Such simultaneous gestures seem to function to intensify an utterance, for example, by pointing to the words being said (lines 4–5), pointing to the referent being mentioned (lines 34–35), or doing a gesture that may further index the meaning of the utterance, as with the open-palm gesture in line 14 and shrug in line 37.

In other cases, a participant begins to gesture before speaking, as is shown in Figure 2: In line 8, B repositions his body slightly and begins making a sweeping gesture toward the buildings in the background, which continues in line 10. As this gesture progresses, he says "there's ninety-percent" (line 9). The gesture in line 8 may function as a kind of preview (or *pre-categorization*) in that it occurs before the utterance in lines 9 and 11 and draws attention to a reference point relevant to the category-resonant description in that utterance. Another slightly more complex example of such a pre-categorizing gesture occurs in lines 24–26.



Figure 1. Simultaneous pointing gesture and talk (lines 4–5)



Figure 2. B's sweeping gesture toward the buildings in the background before speaking (lines 8–9)⁶

In line 24, as he is saying *you're not shutting down*, B is pointing to 1% on the sign (shown in Figure 3). The pointing gesture in line 25 thus previews his next utterance “the one percent” (line 26), which is the important, contested category. In both cases, the targets of B's pointing gestures are in some sense known (or available) to P. For example, the cityscape to which B points in line 8 surrounds both participants, and the target of the pointing gesture in line 25 is the symbol 1%,

6. Some of the images in this chapter have been altered to appear more like “negatives,” in order to preserve the participants' anonymity.

written on the sign P is holding. Goodwin (1986: 33) has argued that “[t]hrough the use of gestures ... the speaker is able to make shift[s] in visual focus an intrinsic part of the work of understanding the talk in progress”, whether or not recipients visibly attend to the target of the speaker’s gesture. As suggested, such gestures may be said to preview the categorizing actions that subsequently unfold.



Figure 3. B’s pre-categorizing gesture before the utterance *the one percent* (lines 24–25)

P’s response to B’s categorizing action also starts with bodily movement in the form of head shakes (lines 17 and 22), which index his disagreement, and are followed by the utterance of the *if the shoe fits wear it* metaphor (lines 23 and 28), which may be understood to mean that if a categorization is appropriate for a particular participant, then that recipient will understand it as such. This metaphor at this point in the interaction appears to function as a metacomment on the categorizing activity itself, which supports our contention that the participants are orienting to this activity as categorizing. In addition, the metaphor can also be understood as a pre-categorization in that it suggests that people should self-identify with respect to these members’ categories, which both participants explicitly do in lines 34 and 36. The deployment of the semiotic resources in this example demonstrates the fluid way that categorizing is accomplished during interaction. For example, pre-categorization is sometimes accomplished by gestures and at other times by utterances, and gestures and bodily movements are used for different functions, such as previewing and reinforcing categorizing. The fact that the participants explicitly self-categorize using the non-complementary categories deployed earlier further reinforces the debate and their disalignment.

So far, we have used one example in which the participants were doing categorizing, pertaining to people. We discussed the ways that semiotic resources, including noun phrases, predicates, parallel structures, and gestures were

deployed implicitly and explicitly to do categorizing at different points in the interaction. It was also clear that sequential order worked with these resources to index various kinds of implicit meanings. In addition, gesture was used in two ways with respect to order in this excerpt: Gestures that precede verbal action and possibly continue simultaneously with that action serve a pre-categorizing function, whereas gestures that are produced simultaneously with a verbal action serve an emphatic function. In short, Excerpt 1 illustrates how a categorizing activity that was sparked by disagreement is conducted in ways that express the opposing stances of the speakers; and in this case, what is under dispute is a (social) object or how to categorize persons and consequently whether the actions advocated by the protestors are valid.

The English examples below are from a longer segment, but they are presented in three shorter excerpts. The setting is a university teacher-student writing conference, which is obviously very different from the setting in Excerpt 1.⁷ Here, the student and teacher know one another, at least, in terms of their institutional affiliations, whereas the participants in Excerpt 1 were strangers. In addition, in this case, unlike in Excerpt 1, the participants are not involved in a contentious disagreement, but rather are discussing how to describe an abstract non-human entity, essay titles. Still the activity in this excerpt involves negotiating the nature of something in terms of types. As Excerpt 2 begins, the student (Ann) is evaluating the title of her essay.

Excerpt 2.

- 1 Ann: =this is kind of like,
 2 {pointing right hand at the title on her paper with a pen}
- 3 Becky: [X]
 4 Ann: [rea]lly so plain,
 5 {opens right hand moving away from the title}
- 6 .. it's- it's just that.
 7 {brings both hands together in front of her}
- 8 brings both hands down on her paper, banging on the desk.
- 9 ... (1.0) what I'm going to talk about,
 10 Becky: {nodding} mhm.

Although the categories here do not concern people and thus are not members' categories, similar kinds of strategies are used to categorize objects. The category of "uninteresting title" is not explicitly mentioned, but is indexed through both gesture and utterance: The pointing gesture and the mention of *this* in lines 1–2 establishes the title as the referent, and the predicate *is kind of like*, [*rea*]lly so plain

7. More details about the participants, setting, and data collection process for this semester-long, ethnographic study can be found in Mayes (2010).

(line 4), a category-resonant description, which links the referent to the category. This example of categorizing activity does not include a pre-categorizing gesture or utterance. Rather, gestures are produced after the utterances have begun (lines 1–2, 4–5, and 6–7), or as shown in line 8 at the end of an utterance to produce a punctuating effect (Figure 4), which demonstrates how these semiotic resources contribute to the fluidity of categorizing.



Figure 4. Ann's gesture at the end of her utterance (line 8)

After agreeing with Ann, the teacher (Becky) suggests two strategies for producing interesting titles in Excerpt 3, which occurred shortly after 2.

Excerpt 3.

- 1 Becky: you wanna,
 2 {leaning back, circling motion with both hands}
- 3 give it a little bit more of=,
 4 {leaning toward desk}
- 5 ... (.8) either,
- 6 ... (2.0) i- .. generate interest,
 7 {circling motion with both hands}
- 8 or=,
- 9 ... (.7) introducing what you're gonna- gonna be talking about.
 10 {pushing-pulling motion with right hand}
- 11 Ann: {nodding}
- 12 .. okay.

Although not mentioned explicitly, but implied by the truncated initial sound *i-* in line 6, the category “interesting title” is made relevant through explicit mentions of *generate interest* (line 6) and *introducing what you’re gonna- gonna be talking about* (line 9). According to Becky, these are different strategies for creating an interesting title, and thus in this context, can be understood as category-bound activities. Although there are no pre-categorizing gestures or utterances in this excerpt, mention of each strategy is accompanied by a different simultaneous gesture: The strategy mentioned in line 6 is accompanied by the circling hand gesture in line 7, similar to the gesture used in line 2. (See Figures 5a and b.) The strategy mentioned in line 9 is accompanied by the pushing-pulling gesture in line 10, in which Becky moves her right hand away from her body and then back toward her body in a repetitive motion, shown in Figure 6. Such contrastive series of motions perhaps help illuminate the different categories being implied.



Figure 5a–b. Becky uses a simultaneous circling gesture in lines 7 and 2



Figure 6. Becky’s simultaneous pushing and pulling gesture in line 10

Shortly after Excerpt 3, Becky mentions an example title using one of the essays that students had read in class: *Scott McCloud’s essay is- .. is called Setting*

the Record Straight. She also says that the purpose of the essay was to redefine how comics are understood. At that point, Excerpt 4 occurred.

Excerpt 4.

1 Becky: he's saying that the record wasn't right to begin with
 2 {both hands open above book, pushing gesture}
 3 so=,
 4 Ann: {nodding}
 5 Becky: {palms facing one another pushing forward slightly over text}

((11 lines omitted))

6 Ann: if he had written like me,
 7 .. he would have written just,
 8 {leaning forward, gesturing with right hand toward the title of her essay}
 9 .. you know,
 10 .. comics.
 11 {hits her title with right hand}

12 leaning back and looking at Becky

13 Becky: (H) <F yes=.
 14 {turning toward Ann}
 15 .. exactly F>.
 16 {gesturing toward Ann with right hand, palm up}

17 Ann: I see what you mean.

In line 1, Becky suggests that the author's main argument has been introduced through the title, thereby categorizing the title of the essay in the text as an example of the "interesting title" category because it makes use of the second strategy, mentioned in Excerpt 3, *introducing what you're going to be talking about*. In line 10, Ann produces the alternative *comics*, a hypothetical example of what the title in this case might be like if it were instead a member of the "uninteresting title" category, made relevant in Excerpt 2. Both participants use simultaneous gestures and utterances to accomplish these actions. However, if we consider the ongoing categorizing activity occurring across Excerpts 2–4, the utterance in lines 6–7 and the gesture in line 8 are performing a pre-categorizing function: These resources index the "uninteresting title" category, by indicating Ann's title, already established as a member of the "uninteresting" category, thereby drawing a comparison between it and the hypothetical candidate member *comics*. Clearly, focusing on the referential function of linguistic units such as *generate interest* or *comics* would reveal only a small part of the action-based meanings for which these forms are being deployed.

Indeed, the final lines of Excerpt 4 (13–17) demonstrate how the prolonged categorizing activity displayed across Excerpts 2–4 also achieves alignment between the participants. Each participant shows an epistemic stance of align-

ment through both their verbal and physical actions and bodily positioning, Ann leaning back to look at Becky (line 12) and Becky turning toward Ann (line 14). In addition, Becky's paired utterances and bodily movements (lines 13–14 and lines 15–16, shown in Figure 7) and Ann's utterance in line 17 also display alignment. More generally, these excerpts also show the cooperative and “distributed” nature of teaching and learning, as well as the role of categorizing activities in achieving an epistemic status (Heritage 2012) in which the participants display their mutual understanding, an important element of the learning process (Mayes 2015).



Figure 7. Becky's paired utterance and gesture (lines 15–16)

4.2 Mandarin Chinese data

Next, we present two Mandarin Chinese extracts, which also show recognizable categorizing activities across situations. In the first extract, which can be considered object-centered, like Excerpts 2–4, two couples, who are college graduates, are having a dinner party at a university-owned apartment. HM and HF are the host husband and wife and GM and GF the guest husband and wife, respectively. While the female speakers are preparing the meal, the host male speaker (HM) draws the attention of primarily the guest male speaker (GM) and begins to complain about how his apartment unit is having all sorts of problems, and, as such it should not be considered a good unit.

Excerpt 5.

1 HM: *Right hand points to the kitchen cupboard area while gazing at GM, starting the utterance when gazes are locked.*

- 2 我们这个, ... () 房子, 好像不太好。
 women zhege, fangzi, haoxiang butai hao
 Our apartment, this apartment, doesn't look good.

((Female speakers' background chat deleted))

3 (我觉得) 这个, 这个, 这个上面啊,
(wo juede) zhe ge, zhege, zhege shangmian a
I feel that here, up there, this place,

4 *pointing gesture continues*

5 这个上面特别== (这个) 脏。
zhege shangmian tebie (zhege) zang
It's especially dirty up there.

6 GF: 对对对。我们的也是。
Dui dui dui. Women de ye shi
Right, that's right. Ours is the same.

((Utterance by HM deleted))

7 GM: 你们的厨房好像小一些, 啊=。
Nimen de chufang haoxiang xiao yixie, he.
Your kitchen seems a little small here.

8 {Turning to look at his wife}

9 厨房, ..是不是比咱们的要小一些?
Chufang, shi bus hi bi zanmen de yao xiao yixie
Isn't this kitchen smaller than ours?

10 GF: 厨房小一些。
Chufang xiao yixie
Yeah, this kitchen does look a little small.

11 HM: 暖, 我们这个房子是不好。我们这个房子,
Ai, women zhege fangzi shi bu hao. Women zhege fangzi,
Right. Our apartment is pretty bad. Our unit,

12 上次看了其他一家,
shangci kanle qita yijia
last time when I visited another unit,

13 *Pointing to a remote area, signaling the other place he has visited in the past*

14 他们, 不是, 这个房子[结构]不好。
tamen, bushi, zhege fangzi [jiegou] bu hao.
Theirs, well, no this apartment, the layout of this unit is not good.

15 GF: [我觉-]
[Wo jue-]
I thought-

16 HM: (我跟你说话。)
Wo gen ni shuo.
Let me tell you,

17 GF: 我觉- 我觉得你们家房子很好了。我们的房子--
Wo jue- wo juede nimen jia fangzi hen hao le. Women de fangzi-
I feel that your unit is pretty good. Our unit (on the other hand) -

18 HM: (没有没有。)
Meiyou meiyou.
No no.

19 HF: 我们家房子..主要是新, 其他没- 一无是处。
Women jia fangzi .. zhuyao shi xin, qita yiwushichu.
Our unit, the only thing good about it is that it is kind of new. Other than that,
there is nothing good about it.

20 HM: 对。它这个结构不好。
 Dui. Ta zhege jiegou buhao.
 That's right. The layout is terrible.

In this excerpt, upon hearing HM's initial claims that his unit is not good due to dirtiness and (later) bad layout, the visiting guests disputed the claim by saying that it is pretty decent compared with theirs. The entire episode can be understood to center around categorizing (1) what it means to be a good or bad apartment; (2) whose unit should be considered good or not so good.

Of course, this excerpt is quite different from Excerpts 1–4 with respect to the various elements of the situation. In this excerpt, notably, the participants are friends (and one couple is the guest of the other), as opposed to strangers (as in Excerpt 1) or teacher/student (Excerpts 2–4), and the relevant categories (“good apartment” and “bad apartment”) are concrete objects (as opposed to people or titles, which may be considered less concrete, as they concern a concept rather than a physical entity). In addition, like the categories in Excerpts 2–4, these categories are not referred to explicitly but are indexed through category-resonant descriptions such as the predicates *kan qilai buhao* ‘doesn’t look good,’ (line 2) and *yijing hen hao le* ‘is pretty good’ (line 17). Thus despite the different languages and different situations, some of the semiotic resources are used in similar ways. For example, in addition to the use of category-resonant descriptions to index the relevant categories, the participants use parallel structures (Du Bois 2014) to index their opposing positions with reference to the assessed entities (*nimen jia fangzi* ‘your unit’ and *women de fangzi* ‘our unit’ in line 17). As we saw in Excerpt 1 in which the participants repeated the word *percent* with different modifiers to index their opposing stances, here the speakers use a similar strategy to index opposition by repeating *fangzi* ‘unit’ with the different possessive modifiers (*nimen jia* ‘your’ and *women de* ‘our’).

As in Excerpts 1–4, non-verbal features such as pointing and bodily movements are also deployed in the service of categorizing. Specifically, HM begins his pre-categorizing activity (in line 1) by pointing to the area of interest (the allegedly dirty cupboard area in the kitchen) to draw the attention of primarily GM (and subsequently everyone else). He pauses his utterance midway (line 2) to wait for his interlocutor GM to make eye contact with him (Goodwin 1979, 1980, 1986). Upon locking their eye gaze, HM initiates the entire sequence of a contested categorizing activity, as shown in Figure 8. Other pointing gestures used by HM include those in line 13, as shown in Figure 9, where he points to a remote area, signaling another unit occupied by a different couple, which is presumably better than his unit. In this sense, this pointing gesture can be regarded as an example of pre-categorization.



Figure 8. HM's pre-categorizing gesture pointing to the cupboard area to initiate the categorization sequence (line 1)



Figure 9. HM pointing to a remote area to introduce a contrasted unit (line 13)

What is also interesting about this extract is that categorizing objects through category-resonant descriptions often involves assessing those objects with respect to quality (e.g., interesting versus uninteresting titles, or in this case, good versus bad apartments), and this can be done through subtle and even

paradoxical interactive moves. Indeed, we see interlocutors attempting to negotiate their positions toward each other by taking a stance with respect to an object (Du Bois 2007). In this excerpt, quite a few assessments made by the host couple and the guest couple appear to oppose each other on the surface. For example, GF's objection toward the host in line 17 (*Wo juede nimen jia fangzi hen hao le* 'I feel that your apartment is pretty good') is immediately followed by a strong rebuttal from HM in line 18 (*Meiyou meiyou* 'no no'), which is then followed by his wife (HF)'s assessment in line 19 that their unit is nothing special other than being relatively new (*Women jia fangzi .. zhuyao shi xin, qita yiwushichu* 'Our unit, the only thing good about it is that it is kind of new. Other than that, there is nothing good about it.'). This statement is further confirmed by her husband (HM) in line 20, where an additional defect of the unit is being brought up (*Ta zhege jiegou buhao* 'the structure/layout is bad') to strengthen their counterargument. However, the interaction in this excerpt is not to be taken as hostile, as displayed by the participants throughout, but instead as a very friendly encounter. The key to understanding this paradoxical situation is a politeness convention identified by Gu (1990: 246) as the Self-denigration Maxim, which includes two submaxims: (a) denigrate self and (b) elevate other. From this point of view, when HM categorizes his unit as dirty, with a bad layout, hence bad, he can be seen as engaging in a self-denigration act (submaxim A). On the other hand, the guest couple, especially GF, praises the host's unit as being not too bad, which "elevates other" (submaxim B). In addition, GF also attempted the strategy of denigrating herself by categorizing her own unit as bad in line 6 and also in a truncated utterance in line 17. In lines 7–9, GM actually adopted a slightly different strategy than his wife, by deflecting the dirtiness of the host's unit and by bringing up the size of the unit as being slightly small, thus showing partial agreement with HM's assessment without agreeing with the more serious dirtiness allegation. This can also be seen as a way of partially "elevating other".

The broader interactional function of the contested categorizations and the categorizing activity as a whole may be understood as showing friendliness and politeness with respect to the interlocutors' property, and hence their self-image. This is quite different from the broader interactional and sociocultural functions seen in the English Excerpt 1, in which the participants were strangers who took up opposing sides in an organized protest. In that case, the categorizing activity involved contesting the categories proposed by the other, which was in turn used to display and highlight the opposition between the interlocutors. In Excerpts 2–4, yet another broad interactional function can be seen to operate between a teacher and student. In that case, the categorizing activity was sparked by the participants' efforts to achieve mutual understanding, or epistemic alignment, with respect to particular writing strategies. Finally, the Mandarin Chinese

example in Excerpt 5 also illustrates a cultural pragmatic convention involving politeness that is not seen in the English examples, though we admit that we are not precluding any such patterns in English as we have not conducted a comprehensive survey of English politeness phenomena in categorizing activities. Nevertheless, all of these additional functions highlight the inadequacy of analyzing linguistic units such as the noun phrase *nimen jia fangzi* ‘your unit,’ as well as modifiers (e.g., *plain*, *interesting*, *good*, and *bad*) in isolation and only in terms of referential meaning.

The final piece of data to be presented is a Mandarin Chinese example where the participants are proposing hypothetical categories of people based on different attitudes toward love relations. Unlike Excerpts 1 and 5, here the participants do not disagree with each other. Rather, they are conversing while watching a soccer game and playing a video game, all at the same time, and supporting each other explicitly. The participants (Bi and Ma) are Chinese roommates studying at a Korean university in Seoul. Bi, the main speaker in this excerpt, classifies people into two types by defining the categories as those who are serious about relationships and those who are not serious and might even cheat on their partner.

Excerpt 6.

- 1 马: 是应该找个对象, 好好的, 是吧? 过过日子.
MA: shi yinggai zhao ge duixiang, haohao de, shi ba? guoguo rizi.
Yeah, it's time to find a good significant other and live a good life.
- 2 毕: 人与人不一样.
BI: Ren yu ren bu yiyang.
People are not of the same.
- 3 MA: *Directs eye gaze toward Bi*



Figure 10. After Bi (left) produces a pre-categorizing statement in line 2, Ma (right) directs eye gaze toward him. (Line 3)

- 4 毕: ... () 你像有些人他就喜欢玩女孩。嗯
 BI: ni xiang you xie ren ta jiu xihuan wan nühai. En.
 You see some guys just like to play with girls, right?
- 5 ... () 看法不一样。
 kanfa bu yiyang
 (They) have a different view.
- 6 ... () 人与人的爱好就,
 Ren yu ren the aihao jiu
 People's preferences/habits are (different).
- 7 他的爱好就是骗,
 Ta de aihao jiu shi pian
 Some just like to cheat.
- 8 MA/BI: *Gaze at each other*
- 9 毕: 骗个女孩上上床玩一玩
 BI: Pian ge nühai shangchuang wan yi wan.
 To cheat on some girls and get them to bed.
- 10 MA: *Keeps gazing toward Bi while Bi switches back and forth to the video game screen*



Figure 11. Ma (right) again gazes toward Bi and maintains his gaze on him (Lines 10–12)

- 11 马: 找找刺激?
 MA: Zhaozhao ciji
 Just for fun?
- 12 MA: *maintains gaze toward Bi*
- 13 毕: 嗯。哎。有些人就是这样。
 BI: En, ai. Youxie ren jiushi zheyang
 Right. Some people are just like that.
- 14 ... () 他又没别的, 他又不图什么,
 Ta you mei biede, ta you bu tu shenme.
 He has nothing else, and he does not want anything either.
- 15 MA: *Gazes toward Bi again after momentarily looking away from him*
- 16 毕: 他花钱觉得, 花的值。
 BI: ta huaqian juede, hua de zhi
 He feels that the money is like, being well spent.

- 17 MA: *Gazes at Bi and then looks to the video screen*
- 18 毕: ... () 那可能就是,
BI: na keneg jiu shi
 Then it is possible that
- 19 有些人呢, 他不,
 youxie ren ne, ta bu
 other people don't (behave like that).
- 20 他觉得他既然谈恋爱就好好谈。
 ta juede ta jiran tanlian'ai jiu haohao tan
 He/these people feel that since it is a love affair, it's worth the effort.
- 21 MA: *Gazes toward Bi after watching the video screen*
- 22 毕: 我不玩了。歇会儿。
BI: Wo bu wan le. Xie hui.
 I'm not playing (the game). (I) need a break.
- 23 马: 歇会儿, 抽根烟
MA: xie huir, smoke a cigarette.
 Let's take a break. Have a cigarette.
- 24 毕: 我既然谈恋爱就好好谈一回, 嗯。
BI: Wo jiran tanlian'ai jiu haohao tan yihui, en.
 Since it is a date, I need to take it seriously, right.
- 25 是分是合这又不是你做主的, 对不对?
 shi fen shi he zhe you bushi ni zuozhu, duibudui
 whether or not a love can continue is not always up to you, right?
- 26 就看你怎么去维持这段感情了
 jiu kan ni zenme qu weichi zhe duan ganqing le.
 It depends on how you treat the relation.
- 27 马: 真的别骗人。
MA: Zhen de bie pianren.
 Indeed, don't cheat on people.
- 28 毕: 嗯, 别骗人,
BI: En, bie pianren.
 Right. Never cheat.
- 29 骗人真的不好。
 pianren zhen de bu hao
 It's really bad to cheat on people.
- 30 ...() 你讨厌?
 Ni taoyan
 You hate (that)?
- 31 马: 还行啊。
MA: Hai xing a
 (This cigarette) is not bad.
- 32 毕: 嗯?
BI: En?
 What did you say?

As noted, the focal point of the discussion, as summarized in a pre-categorizing utterance *ren yu ren bu yiyang* 'people are not of the same' (line 2), is that there are different types of people in so far as their attitude toward love relations is concerned. Although this idea is not really disputed as Bi provides an elaborate

description of the kinds of people he has in mind, we see again a host of features showing how categorizing is accomplished in discourse. After Bi has initiated the activity with the pre-categorizing utterance in line 2 (*ren yu ren bu yiyang* ‘people are not of the same’), he partially reiterates a similar idea in terms of ‘preferences/habits’ in lines 5–6 (*kanfa bu yiyang* ‘(they) have a different view’; and *ren yu ren the aihao jiu* ‘people’s preferences/habits are (different)’). Since these pre-categorizations project people as being not the same, more specific types can be inferred and are then elaborated. As in other excerpts presented so far, categorizing is accomplished incrementally and implicitly, through category-resonant descriptions. For example, Bi defines one category of men through the category-resonant description *xihuan wan nühai* ‘just like to play with girls’ (line 4). This category is further specified as *aihao jiushi pian* ‘just lik[ing] to cheat’ (line 7) and *pian ge nühai shangchuang wan yi wan* ‘get [girls] in bed’ (line 9), *bu tu shenme* ‘not want[ing] anything,’ (line 14), and *ta huaqian jue de, hua de zhi* ‘feel[ing] that the money [spent on these endeavors] is well spent’ (line 16). Bi then goes on to use category-resonant descriptions to define the second category of people (or men), which was alluded to in the pre-categorizations in lines 2, 5, and 6. This second category is defined as men that behave differently: *youxie ren ne, ta bu* ‘other people don’t (behave like that)’ (line 19) and *ta jue de ta jiran tanlian’ai jiu haohao tan* ‘feel that since it’s a love affair, it’s worth the effort’ (line 20). As with Excerpts 1 and 5, parallel structures are also noticeable in conveying an opposition between these hypothetical categories, for example, *youxie ren* ‘some people’ (lines 4 and 13) and *youxie ren* ‘some (other) people’ (line 19). Although the morphological make-ups are the same in these referential forms, their conversational sequential positions (prior two mentions in a larger telling sequence vs. the last one closing up a sequence), syntactic environments (first two being in larger affirmative statements vs. the last one being an independent unit), as well as the intonation contours (falling intonation in the first two vs. rising, continuing intonation for the last one), all contribute to different interpretations.

In this excerpt, non-verbal features are subtle yet equally revealing. Because of the three-way multitasking activities they are involved in – i.e., not only are they using the handheld video controllers, they are also looking at a sports match from time to time – their attention is not always on the other person. What this means is that in this context it could be harder to get the recipient’s gaze, and such shifts would constitute notable interactive moves. This is exactly what we find here: the speakers use eye gaze strategically at key moments (Goodwin 1979, 1980; Tao 1999). As the figures and transcription lines indicate, Ma gazes toward the main speaker Bi at a number of important places, including when Bi first proposes the idea of different categories of people at the pre-categorization phase (line 2), as shown in Figure 10. Ma’s other gaze movements occur when each of the

more specific contrasting categories is introduced, at line 7 *ta de aihao jiu shi pian* ‘some just like to cheat,’ and line 20 *ta jue de ta jiran tanlian'ai jiu haohao tan* ‘he/these people feel that since it is a love affair, it’s worth the effort’. Another notable moment when mutual eye gaze is initiated and locked between the two speakers is indicated by Figure 11, which surrounds the moment where Ma supplies his own interpretation of the first type of person described by Bi: In line 11, Ma offers a category-resonant description in the form of a candidate interpretation of the motivations of the people who take relationships casually (namely *zhaozhao ciji* ‘just for fun’). This shows that the recipient often reacts when the main speaker is making critical statements about the focal topic, categories of people in this case. Furthermore, these reactions help create a sense of alignment, or minimally a sense of understanding, with the main speaker as there was no dispute between the two parties.

In short, what we have seen in this example is a case in which the participants display aligned stances with regard to the categorizing efforts by the main speaker. A unique feature of this excerpt is that the categories pertain to hypothetical people and the activity does not involve categorizing specific referents, as was the case in the other excerpts. Still, most of the semiotic resources associated with categorizing are identified again here, although pointing gestures are conspicuously missing due to the particular circumstances of the interaction (playing video games and watching a screen with an ongoing sports event). The hypothetical nature of the proposed categories in this case shows that people sometimes engage in categorizing activities whether or not there is a need to classify particular referents.

5. Discussion

In this section, we discuss three major issues that have arisen out of our analysis of the English and Mandarin Chinese data.

First, can categorizing be recognized as a recurrent activity in situated discourse across languages? The answer is positive. The following features from the examples we have analyzed can be taken to suggest that categorizing is indeed a recurrent activity: (1) Categorizing is often framed around or centered on persons or objects, which can be more concrete (e.g., physical entities such as apartments), less concrete (e.g., titles, concepts, etc.), or hypothetical (e.g., types of people without specific referents); (2) categorizing occurs across different types of situations in which the proposed categories are being contested, negotiated, defined, or explained; (3) the categories themselves are fluid and subject to participants’ initiation, follow-up, and multi-turn negotiation; (4)

although the categories are sometimes explicitly mentioned using noun phrases or other referring expressions, often they are deployed implicitly (e.g., especially through category-resonant descriptions); (5) parallel structuring of various linguistic units is sometimes used to convey contrast between categories; (6) non-verbal features, including pointing, eye gaze, and/or other types of bodily movement are intricately coordinated with the verbal, particularly in terms of (simultaneous or sequential) timing.

Second, what do our data reveal about the nature of categorizing activities in actual language use? We chose to focus on the activity of categorizing which we defined broadly as what people are doing when they deploy semiotic resources, including linguistic units, traditionally associated primarily with referential meaning, in situations where the question of how to characterize persons or objects is at issue. Our examples support the claim that, defined as such, categorizing is a fundamental activity that is recurrent across situations and languages. What this means is that even when quintessential referential forms such as noun phrases are deployed they do much more than simply refer to real world objects. Indeed, our examples suggest that categorizing occurs in situated contexts, in which people are negotiating stances of alignment or disalignment, in many cases, where cognitive or epistemic concerns are at issue. In this way, individual categorizing actions may be understood as having relevance both in the moment, for example, within a sequence, but also beyond, as such actions contribute to the stances that build longstanding relationships between people in culturally appropriate ways (e.g., Excerpts 5 and 6), and perhaps more broadly, to stances of mutual understanding that may be related to learning in some situations (e.g., Excerpts 2–4).

Third, how might the nature of linguistic units be re-conceptualized from the point of view of social interaction and based on categorizing activities? Our analysis shows that the construct of the “linguistic unit” as traditionally conceived in terms of morphosyntax is either not entirely useful or not always relevant, a point echoing what Ford et al. (2013) advocate for turn-taking. In the same spirit of Ford et al. (2013), we believe that although linguistic constructions (or units) may have certain analytical advantages at certain levels, as does the referential function itself, the practice of extracting and analyzing these forms in terms of reference obscures meaning in two ways: First, extracting and analyzing linguistic units in this way is incomplete because it excludes meaning produced in context and through connection with other semiotic resources; and a second, related point is that such extraction also removes linguistic units from their sequential environment, thus further restricting our understanding of the functions of these units for the participants and in the context, and this includes the referential function itself. With regard to the first point, our analysis of how other resources, in

particular the nonverbal, are used in conjunction with linguistic units suggests that it would be more productive to reconceptualize linguistic units as one type of semiotic resource, part of a coordinated semiotic system that functions in conjunction with other elements. Of course, countless studies have already pointed to the embodied nature of interaction. (See, especially, Goodwin, in this regard, e.g., 1979, 1986, 2003, 2011, etc.) We simply reiterate this point with respect to the question of the nature of linguistic units and the activity of categorizing. Furthermore, our analysis shows that when participants are engaged in categorizing, the categories themselves are made relevant through incremental actions, which in some cases never even involve explicit mention. (In particular, see Excerpts 2–4 and 6.)

The second point – that when structural units are extracted and discussed in isolation, the resulting analysis typically does not take into account the natural sequential context in which they were deployed, and therefore, obscures, or at best, only partially reveals their meaning and functions – is amply illustrated by the fact that categorizing necessarily involves items cast as contrasting, parallel, and/or in tandem. Without being viewed in such a larger context, even the referential meaning of the individual units is only partially understood at best. Take the case of *ninety percent* in Excerpt 1 for instance, without considering its relation to the other numerals (*one percent* and *ninety-nine percent*) in context, we are left with an abstract mathematical denotation devoid of its social meaning and we can hardly establish its logical opposition to *one percent* and *ninety-nine percent*. In much the same way, the referent of *comics* (line 10, in Excerpt 4) is only understood as an example of an “uninteresting title” because this category had already been made relevant through the interactional work in Excerpts 2 and 3 (much of which, incidentally, was accomplished through indexical rather than referential means).

Another referential issue can be detected in Excerpt 6, where identical referential forms such as the three instances of *youxie ren* are understood to be ‘some people’ in lines 4 and 13 but ‘other people’ in line 19, as well as in the near identical forms of the two occurrences of *ta ... juede*, which are to be understood as ‘he/some people feel’ in line 16 vs. ‘other people feel’ in line 20. Finally, in the case of judging the quality of an apartment unit, as shown in Excerpt 5, there is no inherent or literal reason for defining an apartment as bad just because of a dirty spot or particular layout. In other words, the very referential meanings of the relevant categories (e.g. “good/bad apartments”, “uninteresting titles”, “some/other people”, “ninety percent”, etc.) can be called into question or distorted when viewed in isolation.

At the risk of belaboring our critique of the focus on reference as inadequate for the reasons elaborated above, we also point out that referentialism is tied to rationalism in that the denotation of a particular sign is taken to be a straight-

forward mental representation of a real-world entity in the mind of an individual speaker, as pointed out by conversation analysts (e.g., Goodwin 1994, 1996), linguistic anthropologists (e.g., Ochs et al. 1996), symbolic interactionists (Blumer 1969), discursive psychologists (Edwards 1991, 1997; Edwards & Potter 2005), among others. Thus our argument that linguistic units should be viewed as part of a coordinated semiotic system and that meaning, including the referential, should be analyzed with respect to how the various resources are deployed in a sequential context, is also a critique of rationalist theories of cognition. Rather, our analysis is aligned with approaches that view cognition as having interactional relevance and being interactionally constructed and, in this sense, “distributed” across participants (Goodwin 1994, 1996; Du Bois 2014), as is perhaps most apparent with respect to the “cognitive moment” (Drew 2005:170) of mutual understanding intersubjectively achieved by the participants at the end of Excerpt 4.

In short, traditional linguistic units may be taken to function to convey certain referential meanings, but a heavy concentration on out-of-context structural and semantic properties, which are often taken to be in the realm of the individual speaker’s mental capacity, can lead the analyst to miss the following points: (1) the implicit, contextualized referential meanings that only emerge as discourse unfolds and as speakers negotiate positions; (2) the larger social, cultural, and interactional meanings for which these units are deployed in context (e.g., displays of stance or politeness); and (3) the coordination of semiotic systems, of which linguistic units are a part, in shaping the organization of discursive activities such as categorizing as they become relevant at a particular interactional moment.

6. Conclusions

We set out to reexamine how certain linguistic units, associated with referential meaning, are used in situated interaction. In particular, we focused on the recurrent activity of categorizing in situated interaction, where *categorizing* is defined broadly as any activity that involves explicitly or implicitly classifying (or grouping) people or objects into types. Our analysis showed that noun phrases and predicates, some of the quintessential linguistic units traditionally linked to the referential function, are often used in conjunction with other semiotic resources to do this common discursive activity. We take this to suggest that the construct of the “linguistic unit” as traditionally conceived is quite limited. Our contention is that linguistic units, in so far as they can be established in isolation, must be viewed in a larger context and through the analysis of larger activities. Thus, although it is well understood that context can be important in enabling us to

interpret linguistic structure, we advocate, through this study, a concerted effort to expand the unit of analysis to larger scale activities such as categorizing. Such an approach would not only encompass traditional linguistic units and their denotations, but would also enrich our understanding of their meanings beyond just the static referential and in conjunction with other semiotic resources.

Finally, since we hope to have shown, in this admittedly exploratory analysis, that categorizing is an important activity in discourse, we wish to encourage future research that can expand the domain of inquiry – in terms of languages, situations, and even applications such as language pedagogy (Tao 2020).

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Questioning the clause as a crosslinguistic unit in grammar and interaction

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This paper focuses on ‘clause’, a celebrated structural unit in linguistics, by comparing Finnish and Japanese, two languages which are genetically, typologically, and areally distinct from each other and from English, the language on the basis of which this structural unit has been most typically discussed. We first examine how structural units including the clause have been discussed in the literature on Finnish and Japanese. We will then examine the reality of the clause in everyday talk in these languages quantitatively and qualitatively; in our qualitative analysis, we focus in particular on what units are oriented to by conversational participants. The current study suggests that the degree of grammaticization of the clause varies cross-linguistically and questions the central theoretical status accorded to this structural unit.

Keywords: clause, unit, grammar, everyday talk, conversation, interaction, participant orientation, interactional linguistics, Finnish, Japanese, English

1. Introduction

The present contribution explores the ‘clause’, a most, if not the most, celebrated syntactic unit in linguistics which captures the relationship among units such as phrases, words and affixes. The following quotes illustrate how the ‘clause’, called S (from ‘sentence’) in a dominant school of linguistics (e.g., Fromkin et al. 2011), has been understood in structural terms in standard references in linguistics:

A unit of grammatical organization smaller than a sentence, but larger than phrases, words or morphemes. (Crystal 1998)

A part of a sentence whose structure is itself like that of a sentence. Thus, in particular, one which includes a verb and elements that can or must accompany it. In older treatments one clause was described as following another; e.g., in *I said I saw her*, a main clause *I said* would be followed by a subordinate clause *I saw her*.

As now defined, the main clause is the sentence as a whole and the subordinate clause is said to be included in it: thus, with brackets around each, [*I said [I saw her]*]. Clauses are distinguished in most accounts from phrases, by criteria which may vary, however, from one to another. (Matthews 2014)

While the first quote defines the clause in terms of its size, compared to other structural units, the second quote above, besides suggesting that clauses can be embedded in sentences, or other clauses, describes another aspect of this unit by specifying what it is composed of: a verb and its accompanying elements. This is also seen in a similar statement found in the following quote where an inclusion of a particular accompanying element is highlighted:

A grammatical unit containing a subject and a predicate. (Trask 1997)

In addition, some authors suggest a semantic basis for this unit:

The clause is the linguistic expression of a proposition; a proposition is a conceptual notion, whereas a clause is its morphosyntactic instantiation. (Payne 1997: 71; cf. Givón 1984)

The general idea in standard references in linguistics is thus that a predicate (or even a verb) with its accompanying elements constitute a clause, a structural unit, which is understood to instantiate a proposition, a semantic unit.

It seems fair to say that the clause is more or less (often tacitly, without critical examination) accepted as a universal type of structural unit, as it is employed by researchers with different theoretical persuasions in talking about both individual languages and language in general (e.g., Chafe 1994; Chomsky 1957; Comrie 1989; Croft 1990; Greenberg 1978; Shopen 2007; and Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005).

It should be pointed out, however, that illustrating the clause in these references is typically done using English examples (sometimes examples from other European languages) as seen above in the quote from Matthews (2014). This practice is perhaps not surprising considering that English has been the most common form of communication in various areas and fields focused on language, most notably linguistics, for the past several decades.

It should be noted further that the definition of the clause commonly found in general linguistics references is actually very similar to how the English clause is characterized in reference works specifically dealing with English, such as the following:

A clause is a unit structured around a verb phrase. (...) The verb phrase is accompanied by one or more elements which denote the participants involved in the

action, state etc., (...) the attitude of the speaker/writer (...), the relationship of the clause to the surrounding structures, etc. (Biber et al. 1999: 120)

This similarity is very likely due to the fact that much of our current ideas about language have been formed based on the study of (typically constructed) examples of English and perhaps other European languages. That is, we think this focus on English has led to our current understanding of clause as a universal category.

It is interesting that researchers who have a particular interest in crosslinguistic variation and actual language use exhibit a similar understanding of clause:

Ordinary discourse does not consist of isolated, context-free utterances, but of linked discourse units comprising reports, orders, comments, descriptions, and other kinds of linguistic activity. These units, usually expressed by clauses, typically consist of a verb and indicators of the arguments of the verb, in the form of lexical nouns, pronouns, or pronominal affixes.

(Hopper & Traugott 2003: 175, emphasis added)

In this study, we take a crosslinguistic approach by examining Finnish and Japanese, two languages which are genetically and typologically distinct from each other and from English, in order to see whether the unit clause, typically assumed to be universal, should be considered a part of the grammar in the two languages. We will do this in two stages.

First, we examine how the clause is defined and discussed in the grammars of Finnish and Japanese. Is the theoretical status of the clause, structurally defined as a predicate with its accompanying elements, perhaps as an outcome of the heavy influence from English (and other European languages), actually relevant for the grammatical description of the languages we study? Or do we need to redefine or even abandon the clause as a crosslinguistically valid unit (cf. Haspelmath 2010a; Ford, Fox & Thompson 2013; see also Ewing, this volume, Thompson, this volume)?¹

Second, we examine the clause in Finnish and Japanese everyday conversation through both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Our focus on everyday

1. In a recent paper (2010a), Haspelmath distinguishes descriptive categories and comparative concepts, where the former involve actual categories found in individual languages and the latter, theoretical concepts devised for the purpose of comparing languages. We tend to agree with his distinction, yet a standard practice in various approaches in language typology and linguistic universals has been to use categories (e.g., 'clause') found in individual languages as the data source for actual comparison. In this paper, we approach the structural unit 'clause' through actual language use, examining its validity for Finnish and Japanese, in contrast to many approaches in contemporary linguistics where its reality in individual languages has simply been assumed.

conversation is deliberate; it is the primary form of language (e.g., Schegloff 1996), yet our current understanding of language in general is known to be heavily influenced by the traditional focus on written language (Linell 2005). We ask whether the ‘clause’, as defined mostly on the basis of constructed examples in standard reference grammars, is found in actual language use, everyday conversation in particular? We give special attention to ‘participant orientation’, a criterion which has recently been adopted to assess the reality of linguistic structure in interactional linguistics (see, e.g., Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005), to see if the clause is oriented to by participants in Finnish and Japanese conversations.

Our discussion will highlight a number of issues dealing with the notion of the linguistic unit in general and the clause in particular, a concern shared by other contributions in the volume. By doing this exploration, we hope to come closer to understanding the reality of the clause as a potential universal category and its relevance for individual languages. In the last section, we will present our current understanding of the clause in our attempt to make sense out of some of the representative utterance types found in several genetically, typologically, and geographically diverse languages: English, Finnish, German, Indonesian, Japanese, and Nuuchahnulth (Wakashan). We question the central theoretical status given to the syntactic unit clause in languages where predicates and their accompanying elements are rarely expressed together. Similarly, to the extent that accompanying elements need not be expressed overtly in some languages, we suggest that the syntactic unit clause in those languages is not as grammaticized as it is in languages like English.

2. Understandings of similar units in standard references in Finnish and Japanese

2.1 Finnish

The clause has been a central concept in Finnish grammars beginning from the first syntactic accounts of the language. In the grammars from the late 19th and early 20th century (Jahnsson 1871:5; Setälä 1926:² 9), the description of Finnish syntax is built around the concept of the clause. The defining property of the clause is taken to be the finiteness of the verb. Thus, in the very beginning of his grammar, Setälä states that “The clause is the linguistic expression of a thought.

2. Setälä’s 1926 grammar is a modified version of the Finnish grammar he wrote as a 16-year-old schoolboy in 1880. That grammar was based on Jahnsson 1871, which was written in Swedish.

A complete clause expresses with a finite verb an action, a state, or a property of some object” (1926: 9).³

Early Finnish grammarians (since Setälä 1926: 9) kept apart the concept of *lause*⁴ ‘clause’, which had only one finite verb, and *virke* ‘sentence; clause combination’, which could consist of one or more clauses. However, later grammarians, most specifically Hakulinen & Karlsson (1979: 65), citing especially Tuomikoski (1969), suggested that the distinction between *virke* and *lause* was not really needed in the study of syntax, since subordinate clauses in a complex sentence are embedded in the main clause as its arguments or modifiers and thus constitute parts of the main clause⁵ (cf. Matthews 2014, quoted above). In such an approach, *lause* then would approach the meaning of S(entence)in autonomous grammar. However, Hakulinen and Karlsson (1979: 65) also note that compound sentences need their own term (*lauseliitto* ‘clause union’), since coordinated clauses by definition do not have a syntactic role in the other clause. They also saw a need for another term for combinations of clauses joined with connectors other than conjunctions (e.g., *lisäksi* ‘in addition’, and other such elements which can also combine units of discourse larger than the clause, differently from conjunctions, which combine clauses and phrases), for which the term *virke* ‘sentence’ was retained. Thus Hakulinen and Karlsson (1979) end up with three terms, *lause*, which stands for both simple and complex clauses, *lauseliitto*, for coordinated clause combinations, and *virke* for combinations of clauses, or units larger than clauses, joined with connectors other than conjunctions.

In *Iso suomen kielioppi*, the first comprehensive Finnish grammar based on both written and spoken corpus data (Hakulinen et al. 2004), the concept of clause relies on the finite verb, consistently with early grammars (e.g., Jahnsson 1871; Setälä 1926; see above). Finiteness in Finnish is defined through tense, mood and person marking on the verb. Nonfinite verbal elements such as participles and infinitives, even if they have their own arguments, are not considered clausal in Finnish grammar. Thus Hakulinen et al. (2004) define *lause*, which might be translated as ‘clause’, as an element whose nucleus is the finite, person-marked verb (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 827). Hakulinen et al. do acknowledge that there are degrees of clausehood (p. 834), and that even verbless utterances can function on their own as independent utterances; such utterances

3. Author’s translation.

4. In spite of the similarity, the term *lause* is not borrowed from English but rather derived from the verb *lausua* ‘to utter’, which may originally be a Germanic loan.

5. Subordinate clauses are finite in Finnish, and there are few syntactic differences between main clauses and subordinate clauses.

are, however, considered “structurally deficient” since they lack a finite verb (pp. 839–840; but see Siro 1964).

In discussing other, central elements besides the verb which may be included in a clause, Hakulinen et al. (2004) evoke the concept of the clause core, which includes arguments of the verb: subject (also marked on the verb), object and adverbial complement(s) (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 827; see also Helasvuo 2001, where the concept ‘core’ is critically examined). This grammar also does away with the term *virke* for the description of spoken Finnish, retaining it only as an orthographic unit in written language. Reminiscent of Hakulinen & Karlsson 1979, the concept *lause* here still corresponds most closely to the concept of S(entence) in autonomous grammar, since it is noted that a *lause* can be either simple or complex (an *yhdyslause* ‘combination clause; clause combination’). Thus the concept *lause* here does not really differentiate between a unit consisting of just one finite verb and its possible arguments and adjuncts (as in the first definition on p. 825) and a unit consisting of more than one such unit.

The Finnish clause, especially the clause core, does emerge rather clearly as a tightly organized structural unit (Helasvuo 2001). Arguments are case marked. The subject and the verb are especially clearly bound, since the verb shows morphological agreement with the subject and although subjects are not obligatory, in spoken Finnish they are usually present. Both of these facts, the indexing of the subject on the verb and the presence of separate subject (pronoun) arguments, make Finnish rather different from Japanese, which we will examine below. If there is an object in a Finnish clause, it is also case marked; the choice among the three object cases depends on, among other factors, the polarity of the clause, the nature of the verbal action, and the presence of a subject. Adverbial complements and adjuncts are also case marked for their syntactic or semantic role in the clause. The following example illustrates this.

(1) SG151 Kauppi

- 1 Susa: *mut se-n takia-pa-s mie nyt täs aattel-i-n-ki et*
 but DEM3-GEN cause-CLT-CLT 1SG now here think-PST-1SG-CLT COMP
 mm but that’s why I was thinking just now that
- 2 *jos mie sa-isi-n vaik kuukaude-ks tai kahe-ks*
 if 1SG get-COND-1SG even month-TRA or two-TRA
 (what) if I got (work) even just for a month or two
- 3 *kuukaude-ks tö-i-tä.*
 month-TRA work-PL-PAR
 months.

4 Miia: *mm*,
 PRT
mm,

The verbs *aatella* ‘to think’ and *saada* ‘to get’, in lines 1 and 2 respectively, are both marked for first person with the morpheme *-n* (in addition to tense and mood), showing agreement with the overt first person subject *mie* ‘I’ (which is in its zero-marked nominative case form – nominative case is not glossed in our examples). Likewise, the object *töitä* ‘work’ in line 3 is case marked as such with partitive case (one of the three object cases). Note also that the temporal phrase *kuukaudeks tai kaheks kuukaudeks* ‘for a month or two months’ (l. 2–3) is case marked with translative case, indexing the semantic role of the NP in the clause, and that the numeral modifier *kaheks* is also translative, governed by its head noun. Importantly, note also that the recipient, Miia, waits to issue her response token until the object of the clause, *töitä* ‘work’, projected by the verb *saisin* ‘would get-1SG’ (line 2) is issued (line 3). In sum, Finnish clauses form rather tight syntactic packages due to the elaborate case and person marking, and since arguments are overt, and the verb comes relatively early in the clause (Finnish is SV(X)), syntactic and actional projection is early as well; recipients are able to project the end of the turn and its social action early, and therefore are able to plan and time their response(s) appropriately (cf. Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005).

In spite of the tightness of clausal units in spoken Finnish, Finnish utterances can, of course, also take non-clausal form. Consider the example below.

(2) SG346 Koho

03 Kerttu: *tää parsakaali on ihan tosi hyvä-ä=*
 DEM1 broccoli be.3SG quite really good-PAR
 this broccoli is really good

04 Sanna: *=mehevä-ä*
 juicy-PAR
 juicy

05 Eeva: *mm-m*
 PRT
 Yeah/I agree⁶

06 Kerttu: *nii o*
 PTC be.3SG
 Yes (it) is

6. The particle *mm* in its various manifestations is highly resistant to translation. The translation is provided here only to show that the use here indicates agreement or affiliation.

As can be seen, a Finnish utterance or turn at talk can consist of an adjective as in line 04, or just a particle, as in line 05. We might of course consider 04 a 'symbiotic guest' of the clause in 03, since it relies on that prior clause for its interpretation and, being in the partitive case, is syntactically formatted to fit it (Auer 2014). On the other hand, Eeva's particle turn in line 05 is a response to Sanna's turn in line 04. It could be also said to rely for its interpretation on the prior turn. Thus it is not clear whether non-clausal utterances such as 04 and 05 are in fact fully 'independent' units. As suggested by Thompson (this volume; see also Thompson, Fox & Couper-Kuhlen 2015), it is a property of responsive turns to rely on preceding clausal units for their interpretation, and thus non-clausal units may actually be considered to be evidence for clausal orientation by their speakers. At the same time, both of these utterances do stand on their own.

Furthermore, we may ask whether many full clauses might also be dependent for their interpretation on prior discourse. For example, line 06, consisting of the adverb/particle *nii* 'so' and the finite form of the copula *o* 'is', is clausal in form, as it contains a finite verb. This shows that clausal utterances can also be rather minimal in Finnish and occur without any overt arguments. This turn is responding to the turn in 04, a non-clausal utterance, and thus relies on that turn for its interpretation. This indicates there may actually not be that big a difference between responsive turns and other kinds of turns, and, on the other hand, clausal vs. non-clausal turns in terms of reliance on prior turns (see also Linell 2009: 229). In addition, response tokens can be thought to do their own social action of responding or otherwise reacting to what went before (Thompson, Fox & Couper-Kuhlen 2015), and in that sense, they can be seen as independent units.

In this section, we have seen that grammatical descriptions of Finnish have heavily relied on the concept of the clause. We have also seen that although Finnish clauses may emerge as syntactically tightly bound units, Finnish utterances can also be rather minimal, relying on contextual factors such as preceding turns for their interpretation. Next, we will turn to Japanese, which presents a somewhat different picture from Finnish.

2.2 Japanese

In this section, we will review the treatment of some structural units by major Japanese grammarians: from very early on, those grammarians were aware that 'sentences' in Japanese can be represented even just by a predicate. So we will highlight the primacy of unit types in Japanese, particularly of the predicate-only format, which are shorter than clauses in Western languages.

According to Kinsui (1997: 127), there were some Japanese scholars who published high quality work on inflectional forms and parts of speech during the Edo

Shogunate period. After Meiji Restoration (1868), the huge wave of Westernization inspired an effort by researchers to try characterizing the Japanese language using the Western linguistic notions (see also Hida 2007; Nitta 2007), which were originally developed to account for structural characteristics of European languages and thus may not have necessarily been appropriate to capture non-Western languages properly.

Otsuki (1897) was one of the first scholars to introduce the Western notion of *bun* ‘sentence’, defining it as a “complete expression of one’s thought” (Sato: dic 242; cf. Setälä 1926). He also posits the contrastive notion of *ku* ‘clause’, calling it an “incomplete” expression (p. 251). He says that when two sentences are combined to become one sentence, the form of the predicate of the first ‘sentence’ changes (e.g., through affixation), which turns the first ‘sentence’ into a ‘clause’. Furthermore, Otsuki claimed that *bun* in Japanese requires a *shugo* ‘subject’, i.e., a thing or event that comes to one’s mind first, and a *setsumeigo* ‘explanatory word’ i.e., words which refer to the action or state of a thing or state (pp. 251–252).

Yamada (1924), who is known for his cutting-edge and influential documentations of the Japanese language in the early 20th century, criticized Otsuki’s formulation based on the fact that it can not capture one-word sentences such as *kaji!* ‘Fire!’ (see similar observation by Setälä on Finnish (1926: 13; 40); also cf. Siro 1964 and Hakulinen et al. 2004 for Finnish). Instead, Yamada, characterized a ‘sentence’ as a linguistic expression of an integrated idea, and allowed sentences to include something other than the combination of a subject and a predicate (e.g., 1924: 428, 1978: 89). His idea of ‘sentence’ includes a wide range of thought-related activities such as explaining, interrogating, ordering, expressing emotions and so on (Yamada 1924: 441).

Yamada also used the term *ku*, which he characterized as the basic structural unit constituting a *bun* ‘sentence’. When *ku* is put in actual use, he calls it *bun* (1924: 425–426; also Nitta 2007: 254). Yamada’s *ku* seems to include what we may call a clause (Nitta 2007: 254)⁷ and he developed his linguistic analyses centering around *ku*. For example, he proposed two types of *ku* clause: *juttaiku* ‘(lit.) predicating clause’ and *kantaiku* ‘(lit.) vocative clause’.

According to Yamada (1924: 441), *juttaiku* ‘predicating clause’ centers around a predicate. He says that *juttaiku* normally contains a subject and a predicate as in *hana wa kurenai nari* ‘the flower is red’ (p. 428; Nitta 2007: 254), but the subject does not always appear in instances such as imperatives or in statements referring to the speaker her/himself (pp. 446–447), whereas a predicate is the most

7. Yamada states that clause in English mainly corresponds to a dependent type of *ku* (but does not cover other *ku*) and German *Satz* should be closer to the notion of *ku* (1924: 426, cf. Nitta 2007: 254).

important constituent (p.441). Predicates, according to Yamada, include adjectives, verbs including existentials, and nouns (pp.336–445). This definition seems to be shared by Japanese researchers thereafter.

Yamada points out that *kantaiku* ‘vocative clause’ consists not of a subject and a predicate, but of a noun phrase (with final particles), e.g., *taenaru fue no ne yo* ‘(lit.) a beautiful flute sound’ (p.429). Yamada says *kantaiku* takes the vocative format associated with the expression of one’s wishes or emotions (p.433), whereas *juttaiku* takes the format of a logical proposition (p.429).⁸

Importantly, Yamada went beyond a single clause and extensively discussed the phenomenon of multiple clause combinations within a sentence (*bun*), dividing them into three kinds: (1) *juubun*: the predicate in the first clause takes the continuative form and combined with the second (what is called the ‘main’) clause; (2) *goobun*: the two clauses are joined with a conjunctive particle; (3) *yuu-zokubun*: a clause becomes one part, such as an argument or oblique etc., of a higher clause.

Watanabe (1953, 1974:19, 54–55) carefully reviews Yamada and other researchers’ work and develops the analysis of *bun* ‘sentences’. He writes that it is important for a sentence to have *sozai* ((‘lit.) material’ – roughly meaning ‘content expressions’) wrapped by *chinjutsu* ‘modality’ (e.g., declarative, interrogative, exclamation, and vocative). Whether *sozai* of a sentence consists of only one noun (e.g., *hana* ‘Flower!’) functioning as the predicate or a proposition including a predicate and a related noun (e.g., *hana ga saiteiru* ‘A flower is blooming’) is not essential for a sentencehood; instead, Watanabe emphasizes that *chinjutsu* ‘modality’ is the key to turning content expressions into a complete sentence.

Following Watanabe, Teramura (1982:51) also divides a single sentence into two parts, calling them *koto* (equating it to Fillmore’s Proposition) and *muudo* (equating it to Fillmore’s Modality). He says *koto* ‘proposition’ consists of the stem of predicate and its argument, and continues that an argument is optional in Japanese (p.55).

Perhaps due to stronger influence from Western linguistics, recent years have seen shifts in research focus and associated terminological changes. So, for instance, now the term *setsu* is generally used as the closest translation of ‘clause’ in Japanese linguistics, whereas *ku* would be the closest equivalent of ‘phrase’.

8. Minami (1974:107–108), a more recent advocate of Yamada’s work, acknowledges Yamada’s two types of *ku*, i.e., *juttaiku* and *kantaiku* and additionally proposes a subcategory for *kantaiku*, called *hyoodai* ‘titles/labels/signs’. It includes, for example, a name of an institution, a sign of a shop, a price tag at a supermarket and so on. He admits that normally those examples have not been treated as *bun* ‘sentences’, but writes that they represent the reality in language and should not be ignored in linguistic research.

Take Masuoka and Takubo (1992) for example. They call a *jutsugo* (which would be translated as predicate in English) “the central element of a *bun* ‘sentence’” (p.2) and state that there are also elements that are relevant to the predicate in a sentence: arguments (*hosokugo* ‘words which supplement the meaning of the predicate’), topic phrases (*shudai* ‘theme’) and modifiers (*shuushokugo* ‘modifying words’ such as adjectives and adverbs).

In discussing ‘sentences,’ Masuoka and Takubo distinguish *tanbun* ‘simplex sentence’ and *fukubun* ‘complex sentence,’ and note that the latter consists of smaller units *setsu* ‘clauses,’ i.e., the chunks centering around predicates. We can see that their treatment of *setsu* and *bun* is basically parallel to their western traditional (or English-based) counterparts, i.e., clause and sentence. Among the clauses in *fukubun*, they say the clause which involves the predicate at the sentence-final position serves as the main clause, and other clauses are called subordinate clauses (1992: 4–5).

To our interest, Masuoka and Takubo mention that there is a group of sentences which occur without any overt predicate marking (i.e., they call it *mibunk-abun* ‘unanalyzed sentences’ which corresponds roughly to Yamada’s *kantaiku* unit ‘vocative clause’; see Iwasaki 2014 for discussion of a relevant topic). Unlike earlier and more traditional work, their treatment of it is minimal: only two pages in the entire volume in contrast to 134 pages dedicated to predicate-based sentence (i.e., 102 pages on simplex sentence and 34 pages on complex sentence). It is in sharp contrast with how these structural units were treated by their predecessors Yamada, Watanabe and Minami, who published only or mainly in Japanese and thus were more or less independent of Western scholarship: they described Japanese using their own structural units and labels, rather than simply adopting the structural units developed for European languages (which thus might not be appropriate for other languages).

In sum, many, especially more recent, Japanese grammarians’ formulations of clauses and sentences have been predicate-based, similar to how the equivalent units in Western languages are treated. However, from very early on, Japanese grammarians were also aware of unit types in the shape of what would be described as less than clauses in Western languages, particularly *kantaiku* unit ((lit.) vocative clause, consisting of even one noun). Hence, they can be said to represent a more ‘inclusive’ view of clauses and sentences in contrast to a more structurally rigid view of clauses/sentences (i.e., predicate + argument) found in the Western tradition. In Japanese, the syntactically and/or semantically related elements to the predicates (e.g., arguments, topic nouns) are not obligatory in order to have a complete clause and sentence. In contrast, expressions of modality are considered to be the key to making sentences complete.

In this section, we have seen that the terms *ku/setsu/bun* have been used differently across researchers in different time periods. In particular, it illustrated that traditionally, the term *ku* was used by various grammarians to refer not only to clauses but also to phrasal units: however, more recent grammarians specifically use the term *setsu* to refer to clauses and *ku* to refer to phrases (Nitta 2007:254), the distinction inherited perhaps from the study of European languages.

The following excerpt represents quite a typical pattern observed in naturally occurring everyday talk in the language. It illustrates what Japanese utterances are like in conversation, in that predicates without explicit arguments are prevalent whereas predicates with explicit arguments belong to a definite minority. It is in sharp contrast with languages like English, where subjects are compulsory as discussed in Section 1, or Finnish, where subjects are indexed on the verb, and in spoken Finnish usually with overt subject NPs, as shown in Section 2.1. Please note that arguments are also not (co-)indexed on the predicate in Japanese:

(3) Kurieitibitii ‘Creativity’

W (wife) and S (husband) are talking over dinner about work-life balance as academics.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | W: yappari atashi,
after.all I | W: After all, I, |
| 2 | kenkyuusha toshite
researcher as | as a researcher, |
| 3 | .. mijuku na no ne.
immature COP PCL PCL | am immature, right? |
| 4 | S: (0) mijuku da yo.
immature COP PCL | S: (lit.) Are immature. // (Yes
you) are immature. |
| 5 | ... soko made iu.
there till say | (lit.) Say up to that point.//
(How dare I) say such a thing
(that directly). |
| 6 | ((Noise of plates)) | |
| 7 | ... soko made iu ka.
over.there till say PTCL | (lit.) Say up to that point. //
(How dare I) say such a thing
(that directly). |
| 8 | W: ... n=. | W: well, |
| 9 | ... tabenaide,
eat.prohibition | Do not eat (what I have
cooked), |
| 10 | warui kedo.
bad but | too bad, but. |

11	S: (0) hora. VOC	S: See,
12	... hajimatta . begin.PST	(lit.) began.// There (you/she) go/goes again.

In lines 1 through 3, W, who struggles to balance work and her private life, wonders if she is immature as a researcher. In line 4, her husband S immediately agrees with W by recycling the predicate *mijuku* ‘immature’ which she used and calling her ‘immature’. Then in lines 5 and 7, he jokingly produces metacomments *soko made iu ka* ‘(How dare I) say such a thing (that directly)’ about his own speech act of saying such a harsh thing to his wife. It is a fixed expression of metacomment about someone who says things too frankly. In lines 8–10 the wife sounds playfully angry at her husband who insulted her: she takes revenge by telling him that she would not allow him to eat what she has cooked. Then in line 12, S gives a metacomment about W’s speech act that her usual thing (sulking in this case) has started. *Hajimatta* ‘(lit.) began’ is another fixed expression referring (in a mildly negative/teasing tone) to someone’s starting a (verbal) routine.

When we view the sequence in terms of linguistic structure focusing on syntactic units, we find predicate-based utterances with no fully-specified argument(s) most frequently. One may argue that W’s first utterance from lines 1 through 3 would be considered the only case of a “well-formed” clause, if we follow an English-based definition of a clause by saying that it contains an adjectival predicate (*mijuku na no ne* ‘am immature’ in line 3) and a related NP (*atashi* ‘I’ in line 1) which may be considered to be an argument or a topic of the clause.⁹

The rest of the excerpts, however, includes a sequence of predicates (lines 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12). Notably, none of them contain explicit arguments: for example, in line 4, S repeats W’s adjectival predicate *mijuku da* ‘immature COPULA’. Lines 5 and 7 are verbal predicates without any arguments. Line 9 is an imperative, which lacks the subject argument as found cross-linguistically. Line 10 *warui kedo* ‘too bad but.../sorry for X-ing but’ is again an adjectival predicate. The expression *hajimatta* ‘began’ in line 12 is a verb with no argument NP.

This excerpt demonstrates that speakers accomplish a wide range of social actions using less than full clauses, especially the predicate-only format (cf. Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005). Line 4 is an aligning response by S who repeats the adjectival predicate *mijuku da*¹⁰ meaning ‘be immature’ uttered by W in line 3, who assessed her own academic performance negatively. S makes metacomments in lines 5 and 7, which lead to W’s directive of prohibition and a

9. Japanese copula *da* is used with nouns and nominal adjectives and exhibits inflection.
10. The forms *na* and *da* found in line 3 and 4 respectively are two variants of the copula.

mitigation in lines 9 and 10. *W*'s direct prohibition invites *S* to produce another metacomment in 12. It also shows that fixed expressions of the predicate-only format appear multiple times and play key roles in local interactional management.¹¹

In sum, the data from Japanese everyday talk, as well as Japanese scholars' analyses over the years, suggest that less than full clauses, even predicates (i.e., verbs, nouns, and adjectives) **without** any related NPs, are more of a primary option in Japanese (Laury & Ono 2014), rather than standard clauses with overt NPs. This itself might be familiar to those who work with Japanese conversation. However, we also find it worth introducing similar observations made in the work of Japanese scholars spanning more than a century which is mostly available only in Japanese. The primacy of predicate-only utterances in Japanese is structurally in sharp contrast to English, and also to Finnish to some degree. We will now turn to a discussion of our qualitative and quantitative findings regarding the use of clauses and predicate-only utterances in Finnish and Japanese everyday conversation.

3. Clauses and predicates as units in interaction

In early conversation analytic work, it was assumed that clauses are the building blocks of turns and TCUs, together with sentences, phrases, and one-word constructions; these were thought to have points of possible unit completion and therefore allow projection, crucial for the organization of turn taking (Sacks et al. 1974: 702, 721). It has been noted that the edges of such constructions are where turn transitions occur and where participants behave as though a turn has come to a completion. In later work, turn transition has been used as crucial evidence for structural unithood by interactional linguists who focus on the connection between interaction and linguistic form (e.g., Ford & Thompson 1996; see also Ford et al. 2013: 49).

Clauses, like other linguistic units, are seen in interactional linguistics as **emergent** in interaction (Goodwin 1981; Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002; Helasvuo 2001; Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007; Linell 2013). This means that clauses, like utterances with other kinds of structures, take shape in response to many factors, including the activities of recipients (Goodwin 1979). A good example is the minimal responsive clause in line 06 of Example (2) above; its format has everything to do with its being responsive to a prior turn (Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2009). Another manifestation of the collaborative emergence of clauses is that they may

11. The pervasiveness of utterances based on formulaic language in Japanese everyday talk and its theoretical implications are highlighted in Ono and Suzuki (2018).

also be co-constructed, built in cooperation with other speakers (e.g., Lerner 1991; Ono & Thompson 1995; Hayashi 1999, 2003; Helasvuo 2001).

In earlier work, it has been argued that participants orient to clausal structures in building their turns at talk, and even that clauses are ‘the locus’ of interaction, that is, central to the accomplishment of interactional tasks (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005; Helasvuo 2001; see also Thompson, this volume). Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) even go so far as to propose that this is so for all languages, using Japanese and English as examples, making their study highly relevant for ours. Using turn transition, joint utterance completion and incrementation as evidence, they argue that speakers of both English and Japanese use their experience with clausal formats in their own languages for projecting when an utterance is likely to come to an end, and to project what social action the clause is being used to implement, but that the ways they implement this knowledge has to do with the variability in clausal formats in the two languages.¹²

In fact, much recent research in interactional linguistics suggests that grammatical formats are oriented to by participants. For example, Auer suggests in a recent paper that “speakers demonstrably perform (or show to have performed) a syntactic analysis of the previous utterance” (2014: 534). This would suggest that participants orient to the grammatical shape of a prior utterance and fit their subsequent contributions to it (see Du Bois 2014). Likewise, the claim that different grammatical formats are closely linked to the actions performed (Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Thompson this volume) would imply that, on some level, grammatical formats are oriented to by participants in conversation, just as it is claimed by Ford et al. that participants orient to bodily conduct as they build their actions (2013: 26).

In what follows, we bring up the evidence that has been put forward with respect to participant orientation in prior work, and also point out some of the problems we have with that notion. We will discuss the usefulness of the concept ‘clause’ for the analysis of Finnish and Japanese, and we will also discuss evidence for and against participant orientation to clauses from both the speaker’s and the recipients’ perspective. We will examine the usefulness of turn transition, joint utterance completion and incrementation as evidence for clausal orientation,¹³ and we will also examine whether the linguistic formatting of social actions manifest signs of speaker orientation to clausal units.

12. Likewise, it has been argued that grammatical choices are meaningful for action construction (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Kärkkäinen & Keisanen 2012; Fox 2007).

13. An anonymous reviewer suggests that turn projection is another area which might be useful to examine, which we hope to do in future studies.

3.1 The clause as a unit in Finnish conversation

Quantitative facts may, in our view, be taken as evidence of orientation to a particular grammatical format. Namely, if speakers of a particular language use a certain construction very often, they could be said to be orienting to that construction on some level, since they operate with it habitually and format their utterances as such. As argued by Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005), speakers need routinized ways of implementing actions, and the most frequent patterns are certainly likely to be most routinized (Du Bois 1987; Bybee 2010).

In Finnish conversational data, most turns at talk are clausal, given the definition of the clause in the Finnish grammatical tradition as described above, that is, as units consisting of a finite verb and possible arguments. However, overt arguments are not criterial for clausehood in the Finnish grammatical tradition though subject person is always present as it is marked on the finite verb.

Our analysis of more than 750 turns at talk from both dialogic and multiperson Finnish conversations showed that approximately 60% of turns were clausal (consisting of one or more clauses.) The second largest group was made up of turns consisting of one or more particles (approximately 20%). Turns that could not be syntactically analyzed (laughter, other sound objects) accounted for approximately 7% of the turns. The fourth largest category were turns consisting of NPs (approximately 5%). No other structural formats came even close to these.¹⁴ These facts show, on the one hand, that while 40% of turns at talk are non-clausal, Finnish speakers do routinely format their utterances as clauses, and that clausal utterances are much more common than any other type.

These results are consistent with those arrived at by Ikola et al. (1989). In their interview data, 'sentences' (by which they mean, roughly, utterances) which consisted of only one clause were the most common type (p.7). Ikola et al. also note (p.35) that the most common type of one-word utterance was one consisting of only the finite predicate (43.8%), showing that even minimal utterances strongly tend to be clausal; the next most common one-word utterance type were 'response adverbials', that is, response particles (33.3%) and other adverbials (7.5%) or conjunctions (5.1%). Other types of forms all accounted for less than 2% each.

These quantitative facts could be taken as evidence for a claim that Finnish speakers actually, at least on some level, orient to clauses, since they routinely format their utterances as clauses. However, it is also possible to use qualitative facts as evidence for orientation (or lack thereof) to clauses.

14. We thank Karita Suomalainen for her careful analysis of the syntactic makeup of turns in Finnish conversation.

One piece of evidence for clausal orientation by speakers are **increments**, turn extensions which are shaped to fit syntactically with a clause which has already been brought to a syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic completion (cf. Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005; on incrementation, see Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007). Speakers of Finnish can be observed to provide syntactically fitted extensions to their clausal turns, resulting in well-formed clauses, and speakers could thereby be thought to be orienting to clausal structures. Consider the following example, taken from a conversation between two women friends on New Year's Eve. It is common for Finnish families to keep Christmas decorations up until well after Christmas, at least until Epiphany, January 6th. In the excerpt below, Tarja compliments Kati on her Christmas tree.

(4) SG398 Kuohuviini

- 1 Tarja: >(oo)tte< jaksanu hankkia hienon
 be-2PL have.energy-PPLE get-INF fine-GEN
 You have (even) managed/had the energy to get a beautiful
- 2 <kuu:sen°ki tänne°>.
 fir.tree-GEN-CLT DEM1-LOC
 Christmas tree here.
- 3 (1.1)
- 4 Kati: se on <pakko:ho>.
 DEM3 be.3SG unavailability
 it's a must.
- 5 (0.4)
- 6 joka joulu (.) (°tehäs se°).
 every christmas do.INF DEM3
 to do it every Christmas.

Although Kati builds her turn in line 4, *se on pakko* 'it's a must', as a complete clause syntactically and prosodically, at line 6, after her addressee does not respond in spite of the 0.4 second pause, she adds an increment (Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007) which is syntactically fitted to the clause in line 4. The increment consists of an adverbial modifier, *joka joulu* 'every Christmas', and an infinitival complement, *tehä* 'to do' fitted to the modal expression *on pakko* 'is a must; have to'. The form of the infinitive is the so-called A-infinitive, or 1st infinitive, the only possible infinitival form functioning as a complement of *on pakko* (Finnish has several infinitives). In addition, the nominative form of *se* 'it', the object of *tehä*, also fits its syntactic position – objects in Finnish

can be either accusative, partitive or nominative,¹⁵ depending on a number of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors. This could be considered orientation to a clause; she builds her two consecutive utterances in such a way that they together form a syntactically well-formed clause.

This example also shows the formatting of social actions as clauses. Tarja's turn in lines 1–2 is a compliment, and it is formatted as a clause (the finite verb form is *olette* 'be-2PL', in the verb complex *olette jaksanu*). And Kati's turn in lines 4 and 6 is a receipt of that compliment, and it is also clausal (on Finnish compliments and their receipts, see Etelämäki, Haakana & Halonen 2013).

So far, we have shown that speakers in our Finnish data format the majority of their utterances as clauses, and that increments to their already clausal turns are syntactically fitted to the prior clause so that they together form a clause. And we have seen that Finnish compliments can be done and receipted with clauses.

In our Finnish data, we also find counterevidence for speaker orientation to clauses. One type of counterevidence against speaker orientation to clauses are, obviously, utterances that are not clausal; we have seen examples of these in (2) above. However, as discussed above, non-clausal utterances such as *mehevä-ä* 'juicy-PAR' could be considered to be analeptic to the just prior clausal utterance, so that they would 'borrow' the structure of that prior utterance as 'symbiotic guests' (Auer 2014), and to be interpretable on that basis. On the other hand, as also noted above, all utterances presumably are interpretable in context, and the need to argue for structural borrowing may result from a conscious or unconscious reliance on a model of grammar in which full clauses are the unmarked case.

Besides the way that speakers format their utterances, other participants can also be shown to orient to clauses. A prime example of clausal orientation is next-turn onset at clause boundaries. Finnish speakers regularly start their subsequent turn precisely at the point where the prior speaker has come to the end of a clause.¹⁶ Our Example (1) above can be counted as evidence for this, as already suggested. Consider also Example (5) below, taken from a conversation where several music experts are identifying musicians in a collection of photographs.

15. Finnish could in fact be said to have four object cases, nominative, partitive, accusative and genitive. Personal pronouns have accusative forms distinct from the genitive, but for other nominals, the accusative case is syncretic with the genitive case, due to historical changes. Therefore, some grammars will say that objects in Finnish can also be genitive.

16. Vatanen (2014) shows that, conversely, turn onset before the prior turn has come to its projected end is exploited by speakers of Finnish for particular ends. This could be taken as a sign of awareness of a clausal boundary as an unmarked position for next-turn onset.

(5) SG435 Valokuvat_Maaler

05 Jouni: °mm° *toi on se onks toi se Maaler-kuva.*
 DEM2 be.3SG DEM3 be.3SG-Q-CLT DEM2 DEM3 NAME-picture

um that is the is that the Mahler picture

06 Matti: *o*,¹⁷

be.3SG

yes it is

07 Päivi: *on*.

be.3SG

yes it is

Jouni's turn involves a change of plan: he starts his utterance as a statement, but after the initial *toi on se* 'that is the' he restarts with the copula with an interrogative clitic, *on-ks* and reverses the word order so that the subject *toi* 'that' is now postverbal, turning his utterance into a question. This turn does not constitute a single clause, but rather part of one clause (*toi on se* 'that is that/the' which here, prosodically and pragmatically, is not a complete clause) immediately followed by another complete clause (*onks toi se Maaler-kuva* 'is that the Mahler picture'). However, it seems reasonable to us to suggest that the ease and fluency with which the turn is formatted may be counted as orientation to the clause as a unit. That is, although the turn contains a significant self repair, the turn is delivered without any pauses or hearable signs of hesitation. The speaker goes seamlessly from the initial affirmative copula clause start to the interrogative clause. We take this as evidence that in this turn, involving the change of plan from a statement to a question, he orients to clausal formats.

The responses by Matti (line 06) and Päivi (line 07) also come at clausal boundaries. Note that Matti's response comes immediately after Jouni's turn ends, and he has no problem timing his turn exactly at the closure of Jouni's turn, at the point where a full clause ends, although Jouni's turn involves a change of plan and is as such complex. Päivi's response follows immediately after Matti brings his minimal clausal response into completion.

The responses in lines 06 and 07 are of the type that has been called verb repeat responses in Finnish linguistics (Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2009). This response involves a repetition of the finite verb from the prior utterance; it expresses agreement with that prior turn. Verb repeat turns are a very common type of response in Finnish. A recent study (Laury 2018) showed that approximately 30% of Finnish responses to questions, assessments and informings are

17. The form *o* is a short variant of the third person singular present tense copula, pronounced as *on* in lines 05 and 07.

verb repeats; the other common response type is the particle response, which accounts for another 30% of responses. No other syntactic constructions are as common as responses as these two types.

A verb repeat can be considered orientation to the clause as a unit, since it involves repetition of the key element of the prior clausally formatted turn. That is, the repetition of the finite verb can arguably be thought to involve syntactic analysis of a prior clausal turn.¹⁸ Also, by themselves, verb repeats are by definition clauses since they consist of a finite verb, as in lines 06 and 07, which repeat the finite verb *on* in Jouni's turn in line 05 (where the verb appears in both affirmative and interrogative form; but the responses most likely orient to the full clause, which is a question). Thus verb repeat responses can be said to show orientation to clauses merely by their clausal formatting.

The formatting of repair can also manifest orientation to the clause. Consider the next example, which comes from the same conversation as Example (5). At this point in the conversation, Päivi has been looking at a particular photograph for a while. She then turns toward Matti, holds up the photograph, and addresses Matti.

(6) SG435 Valokuvat_kummitäti

- 101 Päivi: †tää ol-i sun kummi#täti#
 DEM1 be-PST-3SG 2SG-GEN godmother
 this was your godmother
- 102 Jussi: [(kovin)]
 very
 very
- 103 Liisa: [joo.]
 PRT
 yes
- 104 Päivi: [nii-hän] se oli. ((Matilta))
 PRT-CLI DEM3 be-PST-3SG ((to Matti))
 that's how it was, right.

18. There is also no doubt that formulation of a response involves semantic and pragmatic analysis as well, since participants must understand the meaning and pragmatic import of an utterance in order to respond appropriately to it. Arguably, a verb response requires more syntactic analysis than, say, a particle response, since it involves a repetition of a certain component of the prior turn. Verb repeats are usually done in the same tense, person and mood as in the prior utterance, although they may also manifest deictic shifts. They may be done in the same or different polarity.

- 105 Matti: >ei-ku< **Jukka-n.**
 NEG.3SG-CLI NAME-GEN
 no, Jukka's
 106 (0.9)

Päivi tells Matti (line 101) that the person in the photograph she is showing to Matti is his godmother, and then in line 104, suggests that this is the case, using the clitic *-hAn*, which expresses that the information is shared knowledge (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 797). Matti responds in line 105 using the repair particle *eiku* (Sorjonen & Laakso 2005, 2010) and providing the form *Jukan*, 'Jukka-GEN', a repair of the element *sun* 2SG-GEN (line 101). This item can be interpreted as the repair of just that element in Päivi's turn in line 101 due to the match of the case element. In that sense, Matti, in choosing the form of the repairing element, might be said to be orienting to the argument structure of the clause in Päivi's turn, on which it could be said to be analeptic (Auer 2014). We could, of course, also argue that Matti's turn is in fact only orienting to the form of the NP in which *sun* 'your' is a modifier of the noun *kummitäti* 'godmother'. However, the repair only makes sense in the context of this particular sequence, and as a response to the proposition Päivi's turn in line 101 represents; crucially, Matti is not only repairing the NP *sun kummitäti* 'your godmother', but rather disagreeing with or repairing the claim that the person in the picture, represented by *tää* 'this', is his godmother. Surely what the participants are concerned with here is establishing reference and constructing intersubjective understanding rather than constructing a syntactic unit. However, morphosyntax, here, a case matching the case of an earlier repairable, is a tool which is put to use toward this end. The case of the NP can, in this context, only be understood analeptically, within the framework of the earlier clause.

Another conversational phenomenon which has been considered to manifest orientation to the clause as a unit is joint utterance construction (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005; Hayashi 2003). Joint utterance construction is a practice in which a speaker completes a structure, such as a clause, which has been started by another speaker. Participants in Finnish conversation can also be shown to orient to clausal organization when they complete, or co-construct a clause started by another speaker, as shown in the next example, which comes from a holiday gathering of members of an extended family (for further examples and discussion, see Helasvuo 2001: 42).

- (7) Joulukahvit
 10 Liisa: >kyllä< *tää* *jo?*
 PRT DEM1 already
 This one already

- 11 oli l- leikkitarhassa sanonu,
 be-PST.3SG daycare-INE say-P.PPLE
 had said at daycare,
- 12 (.)
- 13 Sini: mm::?
- 14 (.)
- 15 Keijo: sukupuolen määritelmän,
 gender-GEN definition-ACC
 the definition of gender

In this example, the grandparents of a small child present at the gathering, Liisa and Keijo, initiate the telling of an anecdote meant to illustrate the precociousness of their grandchild. Liisa starts the anecdote (l. 10–11), and receives a non-committal continuer, *mm::*, from another participant (l. 13). At this point, Liisa's contribution is incomplete both syntactically and prosodically as well as semantically, since it lacks an expression of what the child had said, the object of *sanonu* 'said', but after a minipause, Keijo (l. 15) provides a characterization of what the child had said, using an accusative NP syntactically fitted to complete the clausal unit begun by Liisa. By doing so, Keijo can be seen to be orienting to the clause as a unit.

We have suggested here that in our data, participants in Finnish conversations can be shown to orient to clauses because they regularly format their utterances as clauses, build increments which are syntactically fitted to already completed clauses, and initiate their turns at the completion of another speaker's clausal turn. Clausal turns can also be co-constructed. However, we also find counterevidence to orientation to clauses: speakers of Finnish also use non-clausal turns.

Thompson (this volume) suggests that formatting of social actions as clauses shows that the clause is a relevant unit for participants in English conversation. Our Finnish data indicate that assessments (Example 2), compliments and their receipts (Example 4), questions (Example 5), and even one-word responses (Examples 2 and 5) are formatted as clauses. This may also be taken as evidence of the robustness of the clause as a format in Finnish conversation, and perhaps as evidence of speaker orientation to clauses, however given the caveats we have discussed above.

Next, having suggested that clauses are indeed relevant for the organization of Finnish interaction and that speakers of Finnish can be thought to orient to clausal formats both quantitatively and qualitatively, we will examine Japanese conversational data in order to see whether clausal formats are also useful for the analysis of Japanese interaction and oriented to by Japanese speakers.

3.2 The predicate as a unit in Japanese conversation

As discussed in Section 2, predicates, along with the occasional use of related NPs, are considered to be the key by Japanese traditional grammarians in their discussion of *bun*, or more recently of *setsu*. Even though *setsu* is now the standard translation of the term 'clause' in English, note that what is actually represented by Japanese *setsu* is quite different from a typical 'clause' discussed in standard references in linguistics (see Section 1), where both the predicate and its argument(s) appear overtly.

In this section, we hope to show that full clauses (i.e., utterances consisting of a predicate and its arguments) are rather rare in Japanese conversation, and also that it is difficult to establish participant orientation to such units. As we did for Finnish, we will do this first by examining quantitative figures concerning clausehood and then by closely examining linguistic and interactional behaviors which have been used to establish participant orientation to the clause: joint utterance construction, incrementation, and social actions (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005).

It should be noted that the rarity of full clauses in general and the abundance of predicate-only utterances in particular in Japanese conversation are clearly related to the well-known phenomenon of 'zero anaphora', where what would be considered arguments of predicates in Western languages like German and English are not overtly expressed in equivalent Japanese utterances, especially in spoken language (Clancy 1980; Hinds 1980, 1982; Martin 1975; Maynard 1989; Okamoto 1985; Ono & Thompson 1997; and Ono, Thompson & Suzuki 2000). This is a pervasive phenomenon resulting in the abundance of types of utterances illustrated in (3) above. Given that arguments are not (co-)indexed on the predicate in Japanese, the rarity of full clauses and the abundance of predicate-only utterances might be unexpected especially to those who have not examined Japanese conversation, though it is clearly demonstrated by quantitative figures.

So, for instance, Shimojo (2005:69) reports that in his conversational data, 68% (2758/4049) of subjects and 49% (511/1038) of direct objects are not expressed overtly, showing that predicate-based utterances which are not full clauses are the norm in conversational Japanese.¹⁹

In addition, Matsumoto (2003:128) shows that out of 1121 instances of what she considers 'clause' in her conversational data, 44% (492/1121) are without overt

19. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that even syntactic relations such as subject and direct object are questionable in Japanese. For relevant discussion, see Hoye 2008 and Ono and Thompson 1997.

core arguments (i.e., none of A, S, or O appeared).²⁰ Further, among these 1121 clauses, 764 are intransitive,²¹ and 58% (444/764) of them are found without the subject. The remaining 357 clauses are transitive,²² and 91% (325/357) of them appear with only one or none of A or O; only 9% (32/357) occur with both A and O,²³ which again shows the rarity of what is considered a “full clause”. It is clear from these figures that less than full clauses, or even predicates without any overt arguments, are what Japanese speakers orient to in the sense that that is what they produce most.

Having thus established that the type of utterance that Japanese speakers orient to most is not shaped very much like clauses in languages like English and Finnish, let us now examine Japanese conversation more closely and see whether speakers actually orient to clausal structures in building their turns at talk, and even whether clauses are ‘the locus’ of interaction, that is, central to the accomplishment of interactional tasks (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005; Helasvuo 2001; see also Thompson, this volume). The first instance to consider speakers’ orientation to clauses has to do with joint utterance completion (aka co-construction). The example originally comes from Hayashi’s work (1999, 2003) in which H and K are talking about the location of the public phone in order to find each other when they meet:

(8) (in Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005: 494, from Hayashi 1999: 479)

- 1 H: asoko o:: (0.2) teteteto orite[itta]ra shoomen ni:=
there O mimetic go.down:if front in
 “If you go down there, in front of you,”
- 2 K: [u:n]
 “Uh huh.”
- 3 =u:n.
 “Uh huh.”

20. For clausehood, Matsumoto follows the recent tradition influenced by the study of European languages discussed earlier: She determines predicates and their arguments based on imagined fully specified clauses which are rather like English.

21. This includes figures from intransitive, adjectival, and nominal predicates by Matsumoto (2003: 128).

22. This includes figures for both transitive high and low by Matsumoto (2003: 128).

23. Specifically, 91% consists of 13.4% without either A or O, 4.5% only with A, and 73.1% only with O (48, 16, and 261 respectively out of 357).

- 4 H: denwa ga- ano mi[dori] no denwa ga:[:]
phone SB uhm green LK phone SB
 “Phones, uhm, green phones”
- 5 →K: [aru] [a]ru aru
exist exist exist exist
 “are there.” “are there, are there.”

In line 1, H first says ‘if you go down there’ in a conditional adverbial. When K hears H’s production of the verb *orite* ‘go down’, she delivers the response token *u:n* in overlap in line 2. In line 4, H further specifies the location by supplying information about what would become visible to K in front after going down the stairs: green (public) phones. Overlapping with H’s introduction of the green phones, K supplies what looks to be the predicate, an existential verb *aru*, in line 5.

Hayashi (1999, 2003) and Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005: 494) interpret the above as a case of joint utterance completion, and point out that it is a powerful support for participants’ orientation to clausal format and note that frequently, Japanese speakers co-produce only the predicate, i.e., the terminal element of the clausal format. One may argue for K’s clausal orientation based on this seemingly orderly addition of the predicate. Observe the following schematization illustrating this analysis:

- (9) schematization of the ‘clause’ consisting of lines 1, 4, and 5

[conditional adverbial]

H: *asoko o ... oritettara*
 ‘if you go down there’

[locative NP] [‘subject’ NP]

shoomen ni denwa ga
 ‘in front, phones’

[existential verb]

K: *aru*
 ‘are there.’

As the above shows, in H’s turn, we see the sequence of a conditional adverbial ‘if you go down there’ and a locative NP (marked with *ni*) ‘in front’ followed by the ‘subject’ NP (marked with *ga*) ‘phones’: those materials, combined together, have been suggested to work as resources to inform K of the likely format which H subscribes to in the process of production: the yet-to-be-delivered element is likely a predicate and has to do with existence or visibility. So K “anticipatorily completes” (Hayashi 1999: 45) H’s utterance with an appropriate choice of “the terminal element of an emerging mono-clausal unit” (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen

2005:494), which would have been possible with the knowledge of the clause coming from each speaker's experience with it.

Although the above analysis may sound reasonable at first, we would like to point out that in trying to understand the nature of *aru* in line 5, we also need to take into consideration the social action relevant in the context: whether speaker K is oriented to the unit clause is actually difficult to establish. Notice that there are in fact several instances of *aru* in line 5 produced by K. We feel that interactionally K's *aru* and *aruaru* in line 5 are better analyzed as response tokens displaying understanding or acknowledgement towards H's description of where the phones are in lines 1 and 4, rather than as a verb which merely completes H's ongoing clause (which Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) use as evidence to say that K orients to the clause started by H and completed by K herself).²⁴ We suggest this analysis particularly because it is reasonable to assume that interactants' primary concern is to establish a mutual understanding through negotiating a referent, not to construct a syntactic unit such as clause. And there are, in fact, a few pieces of structural and interactional evidence which support our analysis.

For one, in such a context, we also very likely find speakers using affirmative response tokens such as *hai* 'yeah' instead of *aru*, which lends support to our analysis that *aru* in line 5 displays an understanding or acknowledgement. Moreover, the timing of K's first production of *aru* in line 5 also supports the response-token analysis: namely, K produces *aru* in overlap with H's production of *midori* 'green', rather than coming in at a more appropriate place, i.e., the end of the noun phrase *denwa ga* 'phones'. That is, if K's concern was to produce a clause ('joint utterance completion'), she would have produced *aru* at a point where it would syntactically continue H's utterance which would result in a clause, but she does not do so. So the timing of production of the first *aru* in line 5 makes us wonder if we are justified to say that K is oriented to a clause.

Furthermore, the repeats of *aru* cannot be easily syntactically fitted with the utterances in lines 1 and 4: multiple instances of the candidate predicate *aru* would not result in a well-formed or coherent clausal format. So it seems difficult to maintain that K produced the utterance in line 5 to construct a syntactic unit 'clause'. Given that response tokens tend to be repeated (e.g., Maynard 1990: 410), it is in fact much more reasonable to suggest that K is simply accepting the referent 'phones' brought up in the talk by using *aru* as a response token (see also Ono & Suzuki 2018). In sum, *aru* obviously serves as the predicate of a clause in some situations, but in this particular excerpt, we find it structurally and interactionally better characterized as a response token, questioning the clausal analysis given

24. Suzuki (2016) and Ono and Suzuki (2018) in fact propose that frequent verbs of general meaning such as existential verbs *aru* and *iru* grammaticize into response tokens.

to the utterances in lines 1, 4 and 5, thus leaving the clausal orientation itself in doubt.

Another problematic yet typical example which might be used to claim speakers' orientation to the clausal format comes from an excerpt of conversation between two people, R and H, talking about their mutual friend:

(10) Ryokoo 6 (adopted from Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007, also used in Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005)

- 1 R: ... so.
so
- 2 .. hoshitara,
then
- 3 oon- asuko ikanakatta n datte.
there go:not:PAST NZR hearsay
 'So I hear (she) didn't go there then'
- 4 H: [doko e]?
where to
 'to where?'
- 5 R: [oosutora]ria.
Australia
 'Australia'
- 6 .. akichan.
 'Aki'

In lines 1–3, R first says *so hoshitara oon- asuko ikanakatta n datte* 'So (I) hear (she) didn't go there then' without specifying the agent nor the location of going. The utterance includes *oon-* which might be the beginning of the word *oosutoraria* 'Australia' which R later produces in line 5, but here in line 3 she appears to halt in the middle of the word and continues with the distal demonstrative *asuko*.²⁵ Spatially, it indexes 'the location far from both the speaker and the hearer', but this demonstrative is also known to be used when the speaker treats the referent as information that both the speaker and the hearer know (Masuoka & Takubo 1992: 38; Kuno 1973). So *asuko* reflects R's treating H as a knower of 'where (she) didn't go'. Then perhaps sensing trouble, R extends her turn in line 5 by specifying the location, *oosutoraria* 'Australia' in overlap with H's repair-initiating question *doko e* 'to where?' in line 4 (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005: 496–7). In line 6, R further specifies the actor using the noun *akichan* 'Aki'.

25. *Asuko* is a colloquial form of the dictionary form *asoko*.

These additions look similar to the increments in Finnish that we saw above in that the addition of further material after the complete clause results in an expanded clause, and one might be tempted to use them as evidence to say that Japanese speakers are oriented to clausal structures. That, however, is clearly not attainable because Japanese canonically places the predicate at the end of the clause, and here the additions don't result in what would be considered a syntactically well-formed unit:

- (11) ²so hoshitara oon- asuko ikanakatta n datte oosutoraria akichan²⁶
so then there go:not:PAST NZR hearsay Australia Aki
 'So I hear (she) didn't go there then Australia Aki'

That is, generally the structure of a Japanese clause does not allow the added materials to create an expanded syntactic unit, and thus they cannot really be used as evidence for clausal orientation.

Please note that we are obviously not denying the semantic/pragmatic connection which the added materials *oosutoraria* 'Australia' and *akichan* 'Aki' have with the predicate *ikanakatta* 'didn't go' without which they could not have been produced for the first place. That is, as soon as R says *asuko ikanakatta n datte* 'I hear (she) didn't go there' in line 3, its meaning becomes available to H as evidenced in his immediate question *doko e* 'to where?' in line 4; the connection of the actor and the location to the action of going is afforded by the semantics/pragmatics of 'someone didn't go somewhere' just established by the previous utterance in line 3.

In other words, in this example we find the speakers trying to achieve a shared understanding by producing and processing these short utterances one at a time. This appears to be a better account of what is interactionally happening in the segment rather than saying that they are in the business of constructing a syntactic unit clause.²⁷

So far, we have looked at examples which contain less than what is considered a full clause or even just a predicate without arguments. We have pointed out that clauses, typically discussed using English examples, are rare in conversational

26. Utterances such as this are actually common in spoken Japanese, which questions the predicate finality as a canonical feature of the language (Ono & Suzuki 1992). Looking into this further to establish a canonical structure of spoken Japanese, however, is a topic for another project.

27. A reviewer wondered if it is possible to say alternatively that the conceptual unit of clauses guides the interactants to perform the way they did. We think it is certainly possible that interactants are achieving a conceptually coherent or unified understanding as making sense is part of what people engage in, but it needs to be stressed that that is not the same with the production of syntactic unit 'clause' which we are arguing against in this paper.

Japanese. Instead, these shorter utterances constitute the most common unit type which speakers orient to by producing and monitoring them bit by bit as the interaction unfolds.

The key role played by predicate-only utterances, along with occasional accompanying elements, in Japanese interaction can also be observed in the following example, which comes from a later part of the same conversation as (10). Both H and R are talking about their mutual friend Aki. We find a long sequence of utterances featuring predicates which are syntactically not at all like clauses found in standard references:

(12) Ryokoo

- 1 H: ... de kekkyoku paa?
so after.all null
So (the trip) got nullified/canceled after all?
- 2 R: ... un= daka ikanakatta= toka yutte.
yes so go:NOT:PST QUO say
Yeah. (She) says 'so (I/we) did not go.'
- 3 H: ... okotteta?
angry:STATIVE:PST
Was (she) angry?
- 4 R: ... un= mo atamakichau toka itte.
yeah EMPH angry:PERFECTIVE QUO say
Yeah, (she) goes 'Darn, (I) get so furious.'
- 5 H: .. @@@
- 6 R: ... nanka,
well
Well
- 7 .. atashi yori shigoto o totta tte koto da yone=
I than work ACC choose:PST QUO meaning COP PTCL
'(It) means (he) chose (his) work rather than me'
- 8 toka itte.
QUO say
(she) says.

As shown by the number of parentheses used in the English translation, we can see that there is a clear tendency of the Japanese predicates appearing without overt arguments. In particular, what might be considered the subject arguments are not expressed at all in this excerpt. Interestingly, however, the interactants do not seem to have difficulty understanding each other, suggesting that these short

utterances are complete in their own right although they might look incomplete to those used to seeing clauses of the type found in English.

It should be noted that this excerpt represents an ordinary exchange routinely observed in Japanese conversation where individual utterances seem rather unexceptional. Moreover, the short utterances in the excerpt all perform independent actions: H checking his understanding of the situation with the other participant in line 1, R confirming it in the form of reported speech in line 2, H posing another question in line 3, R giving a positive response in the form of reported speech in line 4, H reacting with laughter in line 5, and R providing a further positive response in the form of reported speech in lines 6–8. In other words, these utterances, much shorter than the syntactic unit clause found in standard references, are produced and responded to one at a time, which demonstrates further that they are in fact oriented to by the speakers themselves.

This section has shown that in Japanese conversation, predicates along with occasional overt NPs, not what is traditionally understood as full clauses, constitute the most common unit type which speakers orient to by producing and monitoring them bit by bit as the interaction unfolds. We have seen that these predicates serve as a vehicle to carry out a wide range of social actions, and both quantitatively and qualitatively available data has demonstrated that the unit clause is not as well oriented to in Japanese as in English and Finnish. We have also seen that some of the criteria used to identify participant orientation to clause have not been properly employed or simply do not work for Japanese.

4. Summary and conclusions

In this article, we have focused on the structural unit ‘clause’ in grammatical descriptions of Finnish and Japanese and everyday conversational data in these languages. Our overall goal was to determine if ‘clause’, a unit type originally established based on languages like English and other European languages, is real to speakers of these two languages, which are genetically and typologically distinct from English and each other.

Both grammatical descriptions and everyday talk have shown us that establishing ‘clause’ is not as straightforward as it has been assumed. In particular, we have learned that languages differ very much in how they format what might be termed ‘predications’. That is, ‘clause’, though typically treated as a universal type of unit, does not easily fit data from all languages. It seems clear that it is a better fit for Finnish and English (for the latter, see Thompson, this volume). We have seen that many utterances, though not all, in Finnish conversation are clausal. In fact, participants can be shown to orient to clauses, although there is some coun-

terevidence as well. Thus, even in a language like Finnish, where most utterances are clausal, there are plenty of other types of utterances too. On the other hand, the clause is not as good a fit for Japanese; not many utterances in Japanese conversation are clausal in the sense that syntactically they do not look at all like the clause which is found in the discussion of languages like English and in standard references in linguistics. In addition, we have recent reports from other languages based on the examination of conversational data which indicate that the clause is not at all a good fit for Nuuchahnulth (Nakayama 2002, 2013) and Indonesian (Ewing, this volume). Both of these languages highlight the potential problem of applying a unit useful for the description of one language to another language. The latter study gives an especially clear demonstration of this problem in a quantitative manner.

Given the above discovery, we would like to point out that in analyzing particular languages, we need to ask whether linguistic categories are in fact a result of our training and tradition. We often observe that the situation that we discuss is compounded by a common behavior of prematurely seeking for universals. That is, there is a tendency in the field to define a structural unit first, based on a (limited) sample of languages ('a priori'), and then search for manifestations in a range of languages. The range of languages closely studied is still limited, as is the range of genres and situations of use. And, the establishment of universals obviously has to be based on what actual speakers do, not what we think they do.

Before we end our paper, we would like to give further discussion on the views expressed in recent articles by Ford, Fox and Thompson (2013) and Haspelmath (2010a, b).

The findings of the present study are critically relevant to Ford, Fox and Thompson (2013) who question the usefulness of "a priori linguistic categories and linguistic units" for the analysis of talk-in-interaction as these researchers fail to see conversational participants orient to them. They suggest that "a priori linguistic categories and linguistic units" may be neither "relevant nor necessary to account for turn construction (p.16)", because formal descriptions are "not interactionally relevant (p.47)".²⁸

The clause is a prime example of an a priori linguistic unit, and by studying phenomena such as turn transition, joint utterance completion and incrementation originally examined by Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005), along with the actual frequency of use as a set of criteria, we have been able to show that

28. Even these researchers are not able to entirely do away with grammatical terms such as 'final particle' (p.23), and indeed they suggest that they, as well as other researchers analyzing conversation, will continue to use grammatical terminology in their future research, as they have done in the past (p.49).

participant orientation is in fact mostly useful to identify the clause as a unit in Finnish. The identification of clauses in the sense of a structural unit similar to the English clause through participant orientation, however, turned out to be rather problematic in Japanese. The above set of criteria did not support, or was irrelevant to, 'clause'; instead it appears to work better in identifying shorter phrases consisting of the predicate with occasional overt NPs.²⁹ In this context, it is especially noteworthy that our review of early Japanese literature also revealed that this latter type of unit was their primary focus, and a unit type similar to the English clause was not recognized until the introduction to Japan of the study of English and other European languages where such a unit is clearly relevant and thus more firmly established in grammatical descriptions. These observations lead to the conclusion that the clause is perhaps not a well-established unit at least in the grammar of Japanese everyday talk, and the central status given to the clause in the discussion of Japanese appears to be an outcome of the influence from Western scholarship which is obviously based on the study of Western languages. In contrast to the early Japanese grammatical descriptions, the earliest work on Finnish grammar is focused on the clause as a unit.

Regardless, our exploration thus shows that participant orientation is in fact useful to identify unit types which are commonly employed in everyday talk in each language (clauses in Finnish and predicates with occasional overt NPs in Japanese), and this leads to our current view that Ford, Fox and Thompson's provocative claim (2013), based on a close examination of what interactants do in everyday talk like our study, is worthy of further inspection.³⁰

On another level, our study supports a recent position taken by Haspelmath (2010b: 697) that 'clause' be considered a **comparative concept** (not necessarily universal) which need not be valid for speakers of particular languages (not a **descriptive category**), but which nevertheless may be useful for crosslinguistic comparison. Our exploration of 'clause' has led to uncovering major differences between Finnish and Japanese (and Indonesian and Nuuchahnulth), which clearly demonstrates the problem of using the term to describe the unit types that we examined in the two languages.³¹ That is, we find that in encoding a

29. Some researchers including Iwasaki (1993) and Matsumoto (2003) assume that these short utterances are also clauses on the grounds that they can be understood to express coherent conceptual units such as propositions similar to what clauses in languages like English express. Our central claim, however, is that in languages like Japanese, the expression of those conceptual units as clauses is not as grammaticized as in languages like English, as the expression of associated elements is not grammatically required.

30. We discuss this in more detail in the introductory article of this volume.

31. Haspelmath (2010b: 697) defines the comparative concept clause as "an expression that contains one predicate and potentially at least some of its arguments and that can be indepen-

predication, the structural fit between the traditional unit ‘clause’ and what is most commonly used in each language varies quite extensively in that the fit is close in languages like Finnish, English, and German but not so in languages like Japanese, Indonesian, and Nuuchahnulth. This leads to our current hypothesis that ‘clause’ may not be grammaticized for all languages, at least not to the same degree. On that basis, we would also like to suggest that looking for ‘clause’ might not be a wise first step in trying to describe a language, especially when the language is not well understood.³²

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dently negated” (see our introductory paper in this volume for further discussion of Haspelmath). This definition, carefully worded to represent a concept for language comparison, not a universal category, is quite inclusive and can actually capture not only the utterance types in Finnish but also some in Japanese we examined in this paper. It is problematic in the sense that a crude application of the definition leads analysts (especially those who are in quests for universals) to miss significant structural differences in everyday interaction data of these languages which we discussed in the present paper, resulting in premature implications of universals which the current study is warning against.

32. An anonymous reviewer rightly questions our method of separating grammar and participant orientation. As one way to look at grammar, we did that, but our assumption was clearly that they can be separable. We appreciate this reviewer’s pointing out the possibility that the representation of real speakers might involve the two in an inseparable way so that trying to look just at grammatical units such as clause as we did might be problematic.

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The predicate as a locus of grammar and interaction in colloquial Indonesian

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Descriptions of Indonesian usually take the clause as the starting point for analysing grammatical structure and rely on the notion of ellipsis to account for the way speakers actually use language in everyday conversational interaction. This study challenges the status of “clause” by investigating the structures actually used by Indonesian speakers in informal conversation and it demonstrates that the predicate, rather than the clause, plays a central role in the grammar of Indonesian conversation. The preponderance of predicates in the data that do not have explicit arguments suggests that this format is best viewed as the default. When a predicate is produced without overt arguments, reconstructing what arguments may have been elided is often ambiguous or indeterminate and seems to be irrelevant to speakers. An examination of turn-taking, overlap and incrementing in conversation also shows that predicates, rather than full clauses, are the grammatical format participants regularly orient to.

Keywords: Interactional Linguistics, linguistic units, Indonesian, conversation, predicate, clause

1. Introduction

Not only has the clause long been a key unit within various schools of linguistic inquiry, it has also recently been shown to be an important locus of grammar and interaction in several languages, including English (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005), Finnish (Helasvuo 2001) and German (Selting 2015). The present article adds to this discussion by examining recurrent grammatical structures in colloquial Indonesian conversation and demonstrating that in colloquial Indonesian it is the predicate that functions as a key locus of grammatical and interactional organisation, while clause-like structures manifesting morphosyntactic links between predicates and arguments are better viewed as emergent in the context of language use.

Colloquial Indonesian is an informal register of Indonesian used conversationally, in popular media, and informal written texts, such as those found in internet messaging (Ewing 2005a; Djenar, Ewing & Manns 2018). It is in a complementary relationship with standard Indonesian, officially the language of government, education and more formal media. A range of lexical items, particles, and grammatical constructions serve as identifying features of colloquial and standard registers. Most of these are conceived by speakers, and sometimes researchers, as in some way corresponding to each other – for example, *sama/ama* is considered the colloquial equivalent of (among other things) standard *dengan* ‘with’; the applicative *-in* is a marker of colloquial speech vis-à-vis the standard applicatives *-kan* and *-i*. At the same time, colloquial and standard registers share much of the same lexicon and the two registers form a continuum, with speakers moving fluidly between more colloquial and more standard styles of language according to social interactional needs. Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (Sneddon 2006) is the source for many of the features of colloquial Indonesian, but colloquial Indonesian transcends regional boundaries, and is in an ongoing process of becoming a common, albeit locally-inflected, register of informal interaction across the nation through a process of koineisation (Wouk 1999). One characteristic of colloquial Indonesian – both in conversation as well as other informal communicative contexts, such as social media – is what has sometimes been described as its “abbreviated” form, or the proclivity of speakers to “leave out” elements prescribed by standard grammar. In his description of colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, Sneddon compares it with formal standard Indonesian, in which “things are spelled out in detail; along with this goes more elaborate grammar, with generally well-formed, often planned sentences” (2006: 108). In contrast, colloquial Jakartan Indonesian commonly exhibits “ellipsis, omission, repetition, redundancy, incomplete sentences and obscuring of sentence boundaries” (Sneddon 2006: 109). A focus on deletion and incompleteness is common in discussions of informal Indonesian and, whether intended or not, gives the impression that “well-formed” sentences are the key locus of Indonesian grammar, not only for researchers, but also for speakers who during informal interaction regularly “omit” elements from these “well-formed” sentences. Rather than starting large and working down as these approaches do, in this article I go directly to the data and ask what are the key structural configurations that speakers routinely produce in conversational interaction. I then ask whether some form of clause is a key structural unit for speakers or whether it is more helpful for understanding the grammatical structures of colloquial Indonesian if we look elsewhere for its key building blocks.

In Section 2, I briefly discuss some ways in which researchers have characterised the notion “predicate” and then outline the range of predicate constructions that occur in Indonesian conversation, including those with the addition

of arguments, and those that consist of a predicate without explicit arguments. I then argue that the predicate, rather than the clause, is both the locus of colloquial Indonesian grammar and the locus of conversational interaction in Indonesian. To do this I first present data in Section 3, which show that predicate-only constructions with no overt arguments are the most frequent types of predicate structure used by Indonesian speakers. A further examination of various predicate constructions in conversation also demonstrates how clause-like structures emerge in interaction, but the primary building block for conversational interaction is the predicate. (See Thompson, this volume, for similar argumentation involving a language with more highly grammaticised clause units, English.) In Section 4, I look at participant orientation in conversation in order to show that the predicate is also the locus of interaction in Indonesian.

2. Predicate configurations in conversational Indonesian

The predicate has long been a key element in grammatical description and analysis, yet is often assumed to be understood common-sensically. From a structural perspective, the predicate is commonly conceived to be one of the two major elements of the clause, along with the subject. This bipartite division is often said to rather self-evidently reflect a fundamental aspect of how humans conceptualise propositions. For example, for Sapir the definition of a sentence “is not difficult. It is the linguistic expression of a proposition. It combines a subject of discourse with a statement in regard to this subject” (1921:36). He identifies this statement which combines with the subject as the “predicate” (Sapir 1921:36). This same line of thinking also appears in more recent work. For example, Stassen launches his detailed investigation of intransitive predication with “informal, almost ‘a priori’ conceptualisations”, taking “predication as the application of a general concept to a particular entity” (1997:12). He goes on to characterise the predicate as representing “a certain state of affairs” (Stassen 1997:12). Analysts taking a usage-based approach tend to avoid defining clauses in terms of a bipartite distinction. Rather a clause is typically defined as a predicate with any associated core arguments and the predicate is generally seen as the heart of the clause (e.g., Cumming 1991:19; Du Bois 1987:813; Ewing 2005b:15; Helasvuo 2001:28). But again, the predicate is usually assumed to be a common-sense notion. For some languages, the predicate is often equated with the verb complex, e.g. Tao (1996:17) for Mandarin and Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005:484) for English. For Indonesian, the predicate can be a verb, but – as will be discussed below – nominal, adverbial and prepositional predicates are also common. Rather than defining the predicate in terms of word class, for Indonesian it is more fruitful to conceive of the predicate

as a combined structural and functional concept. Structurally, the Indonesian predicate can be (though it need not be) modified with various markers of aspect and modality. It can also be (but again, need not be) in a dependency relationship with one or more explicit nominal arguments. Functionally, the Indonesian predicate does the predicating work of an utterance. By this I mean two things. In terms of information structure, the predicate presents information focus, that is, the asserted information that updates common ground (Givón 2001: 221–224; Matic’ 2015: 95–96). This is in line with Wolff’s characterisation of the Indonesian predicate as “the essential part of the statement which is being made (the new information which is given)” (1986: 128). In terms of interaction, the predicate is central to social action. This is in line with Ono and Thompson (1994) for whom predicating work is linked to the social action being performed. In the case of the unattached noun phrases that Ono and Thompson (1994) examine, such social actions include the more stative functions of characterising, assessing or identifying a situation or referent, among others. For predication understood more broadly, more eventive actions are also included, such as informing, requesting, disagreeing, among many others.

Predicates thus form a category identifiable from overlapping structural, discourse-functional and interactional characteristics. This approach differs from previous approaches outlined above, which generally assume predicates have discrete structural characteristics. We would expect the nature of predicates – in terms of their form and how they are deployed in language use – to vary across languages (and very likely across registers or genres of one language). This section next briefly outlines the range of predicate-based constructions that appear in the Indonesian conversational data examined in the present study. These include verbal predicates, which often take morphology that can indicate the verb’s potential valency and the semantic role of possible arguments. Additionally, many Indonesian predicates are non-verbal and have no verb-like morphology. In Indonesian, both verbal and non-verbal predicates can participate in a variety of constructions, including those with explicit arguments and those without.

2.1 Verbal predicates

The following discussion is meant to familiarise the reader with some of the bare bones of Indonesian grammar. Clausal constructions with predicates and explicit arguments are introduced and serve as a backdrop for introducing constructions with predicates and no arguments. As will be shown in Section 3, these predicate-only constructions are much more common in Indonesian conversation than clauses with explicit arguments.

Examples¹ (1)–(3) illustrate a variety of constructions consisting of verbal predicates with explicit arguments. Such constructions are examples of clauses, as discussed in the introduction to Section 2. In this discussion, the terms A, P and S are used to identify the macro-roles of particular arguments.² Voice is an important characteristic of Indonesian transitive constructions. Like several other Austronesian languages, Indonesian has a “symmetrical voice” system (Himmelman 2005) in which A-oriented and P-oriented constructions stand on more or less equal ground as regards transitivity, frequency and morpho-syntactic complexity. Because of the symmetrical nature of this voice system, the terms “active” and “passive” (which are sometimes used to describe the Indonesian voice system) are not appropriate. The notion of “trigger” has been used in Austronesian linguistics as a more appropriate characterisation of these voice systems (e.g. Cumming 1991; Ewing 2005b; Fox 1982; Gärtner, Law & Sabel 2006; Wouk 1984). The trigger is as a pivot-like argument that “triggers” the morphology on the verb. Clauses that are syntactically and pragmatically oriented towards the A-argument are called A-trigger clauses and the concomitant verbs and verbal morphology are also described as A-trigger. Similarly, P-trigger is used to describe clauses, verbs and morphology that orient to the P-argument.

Examples (1) and (2) exemplify A-trigger and P-trigger constructions respectively. (But see Cole, Hermon & Tjung 2006, Englebretson 2003, and Ewing & Cumming 1998 on the possibility of indeterminacy between A- and P-trigger constructions.)

- (1) Bayu: *Soal-nya orang nge-hindar-in rece=h.*
 issue-DEF person AT-avoid-APPL small.change
 ‘The thing is people avoid small change.’[Cream Soup 542]

The status of this construction as A-trigger is indicated by the nasal prefix³ on the verb, increased transitivity marked by the applicative suffix *-in* and A PRED P word order. However, none of these features is necessary or sufficient to indicate a construction is transitive and A-trigger. In natural discourse there can be a convergence of some features, while others may be expressed differently (e.g. no verb morphology or different word order). The verbal morphology indicates

1. All examples are from the corpus of data introduced in Section 3, with the exception of Example (16) and the clause in footnote 4, which are from the corpus used in Ewing (2005a).

2. Following Comrie (1989), A represents the more agent-like argument of a transitive clause, P is the more patient-like argument of a transitive clause and S the single argument of an intransitive clause.

3. This prefix includes a nasal element that is homorganic with the initial segment of a base or is realised as a velar nasal; see Ewing (2005a: 251–252) for details.

both transitivity and the macro role of the trigger argument. From the perspective of comprehension, identifying which particular nominal element is taken to be the trigger is generally accomplished by being attuned to a combination of word order, intonation and semantico-pragmatic inference. There is no cross-referencing of arguments on the verb of the sort that can aid identification of arguments in some languages, e.g. person, number or gender. Thus, as will be discussed further below, if any arguments are not explicitly mentioned, only inference based on contextual cues allows a hearer to understand who is doing what to whom.

Example (2) illustrates a P-trigger construction. This is indicated by convergence of verbal prefix *di-*, the agentive marker *sama*⁴ and P PRED A word order. As with the A-trigger construction in (1), here too these different features may vary from one instance to another in natural discourse and there is no cross-referencing of arguments on the verb.

- (2) Febri: *Kamu di-cari sama Om Soman tuh.*
 2SG PT-look.for by uncle Soman PART
 ‘Uncle Soman is looking for you.’[K-Pop 197]

A construction with an intransitive verbal predicate is illustrated in (3). The verb has the intransitive (sometimes described as middle-voice) prefix *bel-* (an allomorph of *ber-*) and word order is S PRED. As with transitive constructions, particular grammatical characteristics of intransitive constructions may vary and there is no cross-referencing on the verb. For example, many intransitive verbs are mono-morphemic (as with *main* ‘play, visit, hang out’ in Example (6)) and word order can be PRED S.

- (3) Ratna: *Aku mau bel-ajar dulu ya.*
 1SG FUT MID-study now yeah
 ‘I’m going to study now okay.’[K-Pop 406]

Examples (1)–(3) present constructions that are all clearly clauses, defined above as a predicate with its arguments and other associated material. Each contains verbs with explicit arguments – both A and P in the case of (1) and (2), and S in the case of (3). In Example (3) the predicate includes the modal *mau* ‘FUT’, Examples (1) and (3) are modified by adverbials (*soalnya* ‘the thing is’ and *dulu* ‘now’)

4. P-trigger constructions can also have A-arguments that are not marked with a preposition, e.g. *Kano-nya di-dayung-i orang lain* [canoe-DEF PT-paddle-APPL person other] ‘Someone else paddles the canoe.’ In fact both [*di-V sama A*] and [*di-V A*] constructions are quite rare in the data I have examined. The most typical P-trigger construction is simply [*di-V*], a predicate with no explicit arguments, as discussed further below.

and (3) ends with the pragmatic particle *ya* ‘yeah, okay’. Although in a colloquial rather than a formal, standard style of Indonesian, they are examples of the kinds of constructions Sneddon describes as “well formed” (Sneddon 2006: 108).

In colloquial Indonesian interaction, referents are often not explicitly mentioned but rather, when relevant, understood from context – a characteristic of Indonesian that has been regularly observed by grammarians and linguists working on the language (De Heer 1975:19; Ewing 2005a:234; Macdonald & Darjowijoyo 1967: 271–272; Sneddon 2006: 109–112; Sneddon et al. 2010: 374–378). The following examples illustrate this by presenting utterances that consist of a verbal predicate with additional material, such as aspect markers, linkers and pragmatic particles, but without any explicit arguments. Example (4) contains a (potentially) A-trigger transitive verb. In this and other free translations, content in brackets is intended only to help produce a readable English version or to provide information to aid comprehension of the original text. Such information is not explicit in the Indonesian original and its inclusion in the free translations is in no way intended to be read as representing something “missing”, either structurally or semantically, from the Indonesian example. Often multiple interpretations of an utterance are possible, as will be discussed further below. In all cases, a careful reading of the original text and glossing is essential for understanding the structure and function of the Indonesian in the example, which cannot necessarily be inferred from the free translation. In this extract, Dinda’s friend has asked her to read a form that the friend has to fill out, but Dinda is resistant.

- (4) Dinda: *Gimana mau baca?*
 how FUT read
 ‘How (am I) going to read (that)?’[K-Pop 686]

Example (5) illustrates a verbal predicate with P-trigger morphology and no explicit arguments. Prior to this extract, Amru noted that he has run out of cigarettes and mentioned that several people he knows on campus smoke. Asmita indicates she now understands why Amru runs out of cigarettes so quickly by suggesting, in the form of question, that it is because he shares his cigarettes with other students.

- (5) Asmita: *O jadi di-bagi-in gitu?*
 oh therefore PT-divide-APPL like.that
 ‘Oh so (you) share (your cigarettes) is that it?’[Plush Toys 1418]

Intransitive verbs also regularly occur without overt arguments, as in (6).

- (6) Salma: *Ya udah,*
 yeah already
 → *hari ini main.*
 day this hang.out
 ‘Yeah okay, (I’ll) hang out today.’[Just Chatting 194–195]

As mentioned above, there is no cross-referencing on verbs which might indicate the identity of arguments. This means that when there are no explicit arguments as in the examples above, pragmatic inferencing is required in order to understand what particular participants may be involved with the events and states mentioned by the speakers. In Bickel’s (2003:708–710) terms, Indonesian is a “cool” language with a low referential density – the ratio of overt noun phrases to available argument positions – compared, for example, to English which is “hot” with a relatively high referential density. Indeed in some contexts in Indonesian, as exemplified in (33) below, identification of which particular participant fills a certain argument role can remain indeterminate without adversely affecting the interaction taking place. In the grammatical descriptions of Indonesian cited above, verbal predicates without explicit arguments are usually conceived as being clauses with ellipsed arguments, but such a characterisation will be questioned in Section 3.

2.2 Non-verbal predicates

Non-verbal elements can also serve as predicates in Indonesian, although their predicating function may not always be immediately apparent to analysts. As discussed in the introduction to Section 2, predicates are identified holistically in context based on a combination of discourse and structural features. Features which help to identify the predicates are discussed for each of the following examples. First, an example of a noun phrase functioning as a predicate nominal is given in (7). Here the demonstrative pronoun *ini* ‘this’, referring to an item on a menu that the speakers are examining, is juxtaposed with the nominal *ayam bakar biasa* ‘regular roast chicken’ – without a copula or other linking material – to produce a construction which can be translated as ‘This is regular roast chicken.’ While standard Indonesian has the optional copula *adalah* ‘cop’, in colloquial conversational Indonesian, this copula is virtually never used (unless a speaker is self-consciously stylising standard language for rhetorical effect). Other non-verbal elements that can serve as predicates, and which also do not take a copula, include prepositional phrases (8), adverbs (9) and modals (10). In each of the examples, an explicitly expressed S-argument is juxtaposed with a non-verbal element functioning as a predicate, producing a non-verbal clause. When

providing a free translation of these juxtapositional constructions in a language like English, in which verbs are particularly prominent, some sort of filler verb is usually necessary, such as a form of ‘be’ as in (7), ‘go’ in (8), ‘do’ in (9) or some more complex formulation as in (10). The need for such verbs in English might suggest that in Indonesian similar verbs are in some sense “unexpressed” and that these unexpressed verbs are the real predicates. It should become clear from examples discussed here that verbs, while important, do not play as central a role in the grammar of conversational Indonesian as they do in English. Speakers did not use explicit verbs when producing the language in the examples presented and it would be impossible to establish what exact verb might have been elided. From an interactional perspective, there is no evidence that a verb has been omitted and the only predicating material available (to language users and analysts) is the non-verbal element. Further evidence of the grammatical status of these elements as predicates includes the use of predicate marking, such as the predicate negator *nggak* ‘NEG’ in (8) and the predicate emphasis particle *lah* ‘PART’ in (10). (For a discussion of the predicate-marking function of *lah*, see Sneddon et al. (2010:270).)

- (7) Dian: *Ini ayam bakar biasa.*
 this chicken roast regular
 ‘This is regular roast chicken.’[Chicken Foot Soup 111]
- (8) Aina: *Aina⁵ nggak ke Teh Irsa=.*
 Aina NEG to sister.SUN Irsa
 ‘I’m not going to *Teh Irsa*.’[Chicken Foot Soup 348]
- (9) Euis: *Si Dian langsung @.*
 TITLE Dian directly
 ‘Dian does it directly.’[Chicken Foot Soup 298]
- (10) Rini: *Kangkung bisa lah.*
 water.spinach can PART
 ‘Water spinach is ok’ (Said while looking at a menu, i.e. ‘You can order it’ or ‘I can eat it.’) [Chicken Foot Soup 240]

As with verbal predicates discussed above, non-verbal elements functioning predicatively can also occur without explicit arguments. Some of these are exemplified in (11)–(14). Evidence for why such unattached-elements can be considered pred-

5. As well as using personal pronouns, Indonesian speakers can also use names and kinship terms for first and second person reference (Ewing 2015a; Sneddon et al. 2010). Here Aina refers to herself by name.

icates in Indonesian is presented in the discussion following the examples. The noun phrase at the arrow in (11) has the predicating function of identifying what it is that Hana likes. Other examples of non-verbal predicating material occurring as unattached elements include a prepositional phrase in (12), a demonstrative adverbial in (13) and the modal *bisa* 'can' at the first arrow in (14), repeated in the response at the second arrow.

- (11) Aina: *Suka-nya apa atuh Teh Hana.*
 like-DEF what PART sister.SUN Hana
 'Gosh what is that you like *Teh* Hana.'
 → Hana: *Dua-dua-nya.*
 two-REDUP-DEF
 'Both of them.' [Chicken foot soup 1860187]
- (12) Febri: *Aku mau belajar dulu ya.*
 1SG FUT study now yeah
 'I'm going to study now okay.'
 Febri: ... *Iya. ..Selamat [ya].*
 yes safe yeah
 'Okay. All the best.'
 → Dinda: [Ke Pak] *Syahrial.*
 to Mr Syahrial
 '(You're going) to Mr Syahrial('s class).
 Ratna: *He-eh.*
 uh-huh
 'Uh-huh.' [K-Pop 405–410]
- (13) Aina: *Kata-nya emang susah di UPI ma=h.*
 word-DEF indeed difficult at UPI PART
 'They say (it is) indeed difficult at UPI [an Indonesian university].'
 → Ratih: *Emang begitu.*
 indeed like.that
 '(It is) indeed like that.' [Chicken Foot Soup 69–70]
- (14) Febri: ... *Kamu itu tadi, yang⁶ Eksoka ya?*
 2SG that past YANG Eksoka yeah
 'You (had) Eksoka (a type of online music).'

6. The particle *yang* introduces nominalisations. These are often based on a predicate structure, such as *yang bikin* 'the ones who make' in Example (15). *Yang* phrases can function as ad hoc referents and often identify one referent among many. This *yang* phrase in Example (14)

- Febri: ... *Hm-mh.*
 uh-huh
 ‘Uh-huh.’
- Dinda: ... *Masih bisa kok?*
 still can EXCL
 ‘(You/one) can still actually (get it)?’
- Febri: *Bisa.*
 can
 ‘(I/one) can.’ [K-Pop 644–645]

Stand-alone noun phrases, like that in (11), have been characterised in the literature as free or unattached, because they are not structurally linked to other elements (see for example, Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007 for English, German and Japanese; Helasvuo 2001 for Finnish; Ono & Thompson 1994 for English; Tao 1996 for Mandarin). Ono and Thompson (1994) identify two main functions of unattached noun phrases in English, which are also relevant for Indonesian: predicating and referring. Predicating noun phrases have the kinds of social functions outlined in the discussion of predicates in Section 2. *Dua-duanya* ‘both of them’ in (11) has the predicating function of identifying. Referring unattached noun phrases are used to negotiate referents. Ono and Thompson (1994) found that in their English data referring unattached noun phrases often occur in left-dislocation constructions. In Indonesian, possibly due to the high frequency of unexpressed arguments, referring unattached noun phrases frequently occur utterance finally as an extension to a turn. (See discussion of extensions in Section 4.2.3 below.) This is illustrated in (15).

- (15) Febri: *Ini mah yang bikin,*
 this PART.SUN YANG make
 ‘as for this the one who makes (it),’
kalau ga yang dari Korea,
 if NEG YANG from Korea
 ‘if (they are) not the one from Korea,’
Jepang ya?
 Japan yeah
 ‘(they are from) Japan right?’

can be thought of as something like ‘the Eksoka app (among the various apps we’re looking at)’. *Yang* phrases are also used in relative clause constructions, as in (15), *aplikasi yang ginian* ‘applications that are like this’. For a detailed discussion of the different functions of *yang* phrases, see Englebretson (2008).

- ..*aplikasi ginian*.
 app like.this
 ‘this kind of application.’ [K-Pop 552–555]
- Dinda: .. *Hm?*
 huh
 ‘huh?’ [K-Pop 552–555]
- Febri: .. *Aplikasi yang ginian?*
 app YANG like.this
 ‘Apps that are like this.’
- Dinda: *Dari Bandung ko=k*.
 from Bandung PART
 ‘(They’re) from Bandung you know.’ [K-Pop 552–558]

Febri is talking about apps on her mobile device and says that the ones she is looking at are from Korea or Japan. She has only identified these apps with the demonstrate pronoun *ini* ‘these’. After a possible turn completion point, followed by short pause, Febri produces the unattached noun phrase at the first arrow, which explicitly expresses what she is referring to. When Dinda indicates she did not catch what Febri said, Febri produces a second referring unattached noun phrase (second arrow). Dinda then says something about this referent, namely correcting her friend, using an unattached prepositional phrase to say that these apps are from Bandung. Among the 122 unattached noun phrases identified in the data used for this article, 102 (87%) are predicating while 20 (16%) are referring. Ono and Thompson (1994) similarly found that the majority of unattached noun phrases in their English data were predicating. The discussion of unattached noun phrases in the remainder of this article will concern only those with a predicating function.⁷

7. For analysts, it may not always be immediately apparent whether an unattached noun phrase has a referring or predicating function, but close inspection of the discourse context will usually clarify this. The following example illustrates such a possible borderline case.

- Amru: *Soal-nya bukan aku doa=ng yang nge-rokok*.
 problem-DEF NEG 1SG only YANG AT-smoke
 ‘The thing is, the ones who smoke are not only me.’
- *Orang lain*.
 person other
 ‘(It’s) other people.’
- *Anak-anak arsi*.
 child-REDUP architecture
 ‘(It’s) the guys from architecture.’ [Plush Toys 1415–1417]

The other stand-alone elements in (12)–(14) are similarly unattached in that, like unattached noun phrases, they are neither conjoined with other elements nor are they constituents of larger units such as a clause. Such grammatically unattached elements have semantic or pragmatic links to either the discourse at hand or some other prior text or presupposed context which helps to make them interpretable. Because a broader context is crucial for interpreting unattached elements, Examples (11)–(14) are necessarily presented with a wider discourse context than Examples (7)–(10). Nonetheless, despite the inferential linkages that can be made, there is no structural linking, which is what is intended by the terms “unattached” or “free”. In their detailed examination of English unattached noun phrases, Ono and Thompson (1994) conclude that while the majority of English unattached noun phrases have a predicating function, these unattached noun phrases are not themselves predicates nor do they form part of a reduced or

In the lead up to this example, Amru and his friends have been discussing how quickly he goes through a pack of cigarettes. In the first line Amru uses a predicate-nominal clause construction to state that he is not the only one who smokes. That is, Amru has many friends who also smoke and since they often smoke his cigarettes, he runs out quickly. This clause includes the S-argument *yang ngerokok* ‘those who smoke’, an ad hoc nominal presenting presupposed information that links what Amru is saying to the preceding discourse and is the current topic of talk. The predicate is the nominal *bukan aku doang* ‘not only me’, which includes the predicate nominal negator *bukan* ‘NEG’ (for discussion of predicate negation in colloquial Indonesian see Ewing 2005a: 240–241). This is followed by the two unattached noun phrases marked by arrows, *orang lain* ‘other people’ and *anak-anak arsi* ‘the guys from architecture’. The structure of a clause followed by unattached noun phrases is reminiscent of the extension in Example (15), in that these unattached noun phrases are naming referents and could thus be said to have a referring function. But this example differs from (15) in three key ways. First, the unattached noun phrases do not clarify a previously unexpressed argument in the way that *aplikasi (yang) ginian* ‘these kinds of apps’ does in (15). Secondly, they are not negotiating referents which will then be tracked and discussed later in discourse. Finally, what the unattached noun phrases in this example are doing is identifying alternatives, or more accurately additions, to the previously asserted predicate nominal *aku* ‘1SG’. That is, they are identifying others who smoke, where ‘those who smoke’ is the presupposed starting point of the utterance. Identifying is a predicating function and these noun phrases are best classified as predicating rather than referring. A reviewer asked if *orang lain* ‘other people’ could be interpreted as ‘other people (smoke)’; that is, as an argument and thus a referring expression rather than a predicate. First, alternative English translations could also be given for the first line of the above example, such as ‘The thing is, I am not the only one who smokes’, where ‘I’ is structurally a subject. This fact about English grammar does not change the facts about the Indonesian construction, in which *aku* ‘1sg’ is clearly the predicate. Similarly *orang lain* ‘other people’ – as produced by the speaker at this point in the data – has a predicating function. This does not change, despite possible alternative English translations of hypothetical “complete clauses” the speaker might have produced. As argued in the following section of this article, unattached elements with a predicating function can be considered full predicates in Indonesian.

elided predicate structure. Tao (1996) similarly excludes unattached noun phrases from his analysis of Mandarin clause structure. Additionally, in a language like English, other unattached elements such as prepositional phrases and adverbs would also not be considered predicates in their own right, since English generally requires some sort of verb at the core of the predicate. While the case that unattached noun phrases and other unattached elements are not predicates in these languages is convincing, I argue that for Indonesian the unattached predicating elements illustrated here are in fact predicates. Two orthogonal characteristics of Indonesian come together to help lead to this conclusion. First is the fact that in colloquial Indonesian non-verbal predicates are associated with explicit arguments by juxtaposition, without use of a copula or any other verbal linking material. Thus the unattached elements exemplified in (11)–(14) have the same structural properties as the predicates in (7)–(10); in both cases there is no need to posit a “missing” copula or other verb. Second is the fact that verbal predicates regularly occur without explicit arguments, as discussed in Section 2.1. Given the large amount of unattached non-verbal predicating material in Indonesian conversation, the most parsimonious analysis is to conclude that for Indonesian all predicates, verbal and non-verbal, function in the same way in this regard. That is, non-verbal predicates will also occur without explicit arguments and, because no copula or other verb is used, these non-verbal elements appear as unattached elements, but are still predicates.

Further evidence that these unattached elements are indeed predicates is the fact that they can occur with modals, aspect markers and pragmatic particles that also occur with verbal predicates. We see this in (13) *emang begitu* ‘indeed like that’ and (14) *masih bisa kok* ‘still can actually’. Note also in (13) the dialogic resonance (Du Bois 2014) between the structures used in Aina’s statement and Ratih’s response. Aina says *emang susah* ‘(it is) indeed difficult’ with the stative verb *susah* ‘(to be) difficult’ and Ratih confirms that she agrees with Aina’s assessment, saying *emang begitu* ‘(it is) indeed like that’, using that adverb *begitu*. Further examples of predicate marking on otherwise unattached non-verbal elements are seen in (16) *udah kota administratif* ‘already an administrative city’ and (17) *nggak ke arah Jawa* ‘not toward Java’.

- (16) Daud: *Oh, sudah kota administratif ya?*
 oh already city administrative yes
 ‘Oh, (it’s) already an administrative city right?’ [Jember 109–110]

- (17) Amru: *Leuwi Panjang tuh nggak ada yang ke .. timur?*
 Leuwi Panjang that NEG EXIST YANG to east
 ‘Leuwi Panjang (bus terminal) doesn’t have any (buses) going east?’
eh nggak --
uh NEG
 ‘Uh (they) don’t,’
 → ... *nggak ke ara=h* (H) *Jawa ya?*
 NEG to direction Java yeah
 ‘(they) don’t (go) toward Java right?’ [Plush Toys 436–438]

A final piece of evidence regarding the role of predicates comes from constructions of the type exemplified in (18) and (19). These are non-verbal clauses where the S-argument comprises an element that has been nominalised with the definite enclitic *-nya* and juxtaposed with a non-verbal predicate. Languages of the world typically have specific grammatical means for indicating different configurations of information structure (for example Lambrecht (1994) and work of numerous scholars inspired by Lambrecht). The construction exemplified in (18) and (19) is commonly used in Indonesian conversation as a means to place a non-verbal element in predicate position when it, rather than a verb, carries information focus.

- (18) Sita: *Soal-nya, kamu-nya nggak main terus.*
 issue-DEF 2SG-DEF NEG hang.out continue
 ‘The thing is, you don’t hang out at all.’
 → .. *Main-nya sama Kang Agoy aja terus.*
 hang.out-DEF with older.brother A. just continually
 ‘(You’re) always just hanging out with *Kang Agoy*.’ (Lit: ‘The (your) hanging out is always only with *Kang Agoy*.’) [Blackout 191–193]
- (19) → Fakri: *Kalau saya kerja-nya di Cimahi.*
 if 1SG work-DEF in C.
 ‘I work in Cimahi’ (Lit: As for me, the (my) working is in Cimahi.)
 [Just Met 125]

In (18), Sita complains that Salma, the friend she is speaking to, never hangs out with her anymore. She does this by using a verbal predicate *main*, literally ‘to play’, here meaning ‘to socialise, hang out’. She then goes on to complain that Salma is always hanging out with her new boyfriend Agoy. At the arrow, the verb *main* is nominalised with the enclitic *-nya*, meaning something like ‘the hanging out’ or in this context ‘your hanging out’. This nominalisation is juxtaposed with the prepositional phrase *sama Kang Agoy* ‘with *Kang Agoy*’, which serves as

the predicate. In the first line of the example, the concept ‘hanging out’ (*main*) is the focus of assertion and is presented in the predicate. In the second line, the concept ‘hanging out’ is presented as presupposed information and the verb is marked with *-nya*, which simultaneously nominalises *main* and marks it as identifiable. This nominalised verb then stands in the prototypical position for given information, the trigger slot. The focus of assertion is the prepositional phrase *sama Kang Agoy* ‘with Kang Agoy’, which is in the predicate position. Example (19) illustrates the same construction type. The verb *kerja* ‘to work’ is nominalised with *-nya* and juxtaposed with the location of the speaker’s work *di Cimahi* ‘in Cimahi’, which is the predicate. In this case the verb *kerja* has not been previously mentioned, but the discussion has been about Fakri’s activities after graduation and so the concept of ‘work’ is presupposed as identifiable information based on cultural schema about what people do after finishing university. Again, as in (18), the information that is in focus is placed in predicate position and the verb (which might prototypically be thought of as belonging in predicate position) is presented as identifiable information and is the S-argument. This same structure was also seen in the first line of Example (11), *Sukanya apa?*, which would normally be given a free translation ‘What do (you) like?’, but whose structure is more literally ‘The/your liking is what?’. That is, the question word *apa* ‘what’ does not occur as the P of the verb *suka* ‘like’, but rather is a predicate nominal juxtaposed with the S-argument *suka-nya* ‘the liking’. What these examples represent is a common construction type in colloquial Indonesian (despite the fact that structurally equivalent expressions might sound stilted in a language like English), and its use indicates the grammatical preference of Indonesian speakers for putting asserted – that is predicating – information in the structural position of predicate, rather than, say, adjunct (as in the English translations, e.g. ‘I work in Cimahi’). I would further suggest that the frequent occurrence of these structures also supports the contention that unattached elements can in fact be predicates. This support comes from the general importance placed on non-verbal predicates in Indonesian conversational discourse and does not entail any claim that non-verbal predicates such as those in Examples (11)–(14) are in any sense derived from clausal structures like those in (18)–(19).

2.3 When there are no explicit arguments

What is the relationship between predicate constructions without explicit arguments and clauses that contain predicates and (some) arguments? As discussed above, the conventional approach has been to use the metaphor of omission, and to describe predicate-only structures as clauses in which arguments have

been ellipted. But this raises at least two questions: What arguments have been ellipted? What is the nature of the original clause construction which forms the basis of a reduced predicate structure? In this section I show that, based on the language of conversational interaction, the answers are often indeterminate. If there is no determinable clause on which predicate structures can be said to be based, this suggests that for speakers and hearers in everyday interaction, predicates are in fact not reduced forms, but are exactly as produced. Rather than “reduced” clauses with “elided” arguments, predicates – both verbal and non-verbal – without arguments are complete constructions in their own right. This line of reasoning follows that of Thompson, Fox and Couper-Kuhlen (2015) in their discussion of more-minimal responsive actions.

Consider Example (20) (which will be repeated in its larger context in (25)). Fakri has just entered a study space and is speaking to Asmita for the first time. He is asking for permission to join her in that space so that he can charge his phone. While we can infer that the predicates, *numpang* ‘join’ and *ngecas* ‘charge’ involve Fakri himself, it is impossible to reconstruct a specific lexical item that can be said to have been omitted. In Indonesian there are multiple forms that can be used for first person reference and which form a speaker will use at any given time is influenced by a combination of register, social relationships and presentation of stance in the moment of speaking (Djenar 2015; Englebretson 2007; Ewing 2015a). The same speaker may refer to themselves with different forms during a single encounter, as interactional needs shift and change. Thus it is impossible to say at this point whether Fakri has “omitted” *saya* ‘1SG formal’, *aku* ‘1SG informal’, *gue* ‘1SG Jakartan’⁸ or any number of other possible ways of referring to self. He has simply chosen not to express first person reference and to allow his intentions to be interpretable from context.

- (20) Fakri: *N-(t)umpang nge-cas.*
 AT-join AT-charge
 ‘join in and charge.’[Just Met 3]

It is in fact probably rather simplistic to expect that a specific pronoun, word or phrase has been elided when a predicate occurs without arguments. A more convincing case can be made that it is a referent – rather than a specific form – that is not being mentioned. Thus in (20) one might say that what is “missing” is explicit reference to first person, rather than a specific first person pronoun. But at many points in conversational interaction even this line of analysis falls short because

8. These glosses are rather imprecise. For a more detailed discussion of person reference in Indonesian, see Djenar, Ewing and Manns (2018: 23–63).

there are cases where a possible referent for a particular unexpressed argument is indeterminate. This is illustrated in Example (21).

- (21) a. Fakri: ... (2.9) *Kalau Desain Interio=r*,
 if design interior
 ‘As for Interior Design,’
- b. *Eh. Interior ya?*
 REPAIR interior yeah
 ‘(You’re studying) Interior (Design) right?’
- c. Asmita: *Iya... Desain Interior.*
 Yes. design interior
 ‘Yes. Interior Design.’
- d. Fakri: ... *Banyak*,
 many
 ‘Many,’
- e. *kalau Bandung banyak*,
 if Bandung many
 ‘As for Bandung there are many,’
- f. .. *banyak ini kok=.*
 many this EXCL
 ‘There really are many of these.’ [lit. ‘these are many really’]
- g. Asmita: .. *Banyak sih.*
 many PART
 ‘There really are many.’ [Just Met 299–307]

Here Fakri and Asmita are discussing their education and careers. In lines a.-c. Fakri first recalls, then double-checks, that Asmita is studying Interior Design. After she confirms this, he then goes on to say there are many in Bandung. Note that structurally the stative verb *banyak* ‘to be many’ typically stands in predicate position as illustrated more clearly in (22). The S-argument of *banyak* ‘many’ can occur in pre-predicate position as in (22), but more often is in post-predicate position as in (21f).

- (22) Amru: *barang kita masih banyak gak=?*
 things 1PL still many NEG
 ‘We still have lots of things (or) not?’ (i.e. ‘don’t we?’) (Lit: Our things
 are still many (or) not?) [Plush Toys 337]

Thus in (21) lines d.-f. Fakri produces the predicate *banyak* three times, twice without an explicit argument, and once (line f.) with an S-argument, the demonstrative *ini* ‘this,’ which might be referring to some entity or to the general situa-

tion. *Ini* 'this' in this case, could also be interpreted as a word search. (See Djenar (2014) on the wide range of functions, interpretations and ambiguities of Indonesian demonstratives.) Asmita then replies in line g. using only *banyak* with no explicit argument. Prior to this excerpt, Fakri has discussed various people he knows who work in the Interior Design industry in Bandung and the kinds of opportunities they have for employment with different firms. So what exactly are there many of in Bandung, according Fakri and Asmita in (21)? It could arguably be graduates with degrees in Interior Design, job opportunities in the field, firms looking for people with expertise in the field, or any number of other related entities. For the analyst, it is impossible to determine what referent is left unexpressed when Fakri says *banyak* 'there are many.' More importantly, there is no indication that it is important for the participants in the interaction what precise referent should be reconstructed. The predicate formats without arguments or with ambiguous *ini* 'this' that Fakri has produced are sufficiently meaningful as they are, in order to get the job done at this point in the interaction. Indeed, Asmita agrees, replying in line g. that there are many, despite the fact that Fakri has not explicitly mentioned what it is he is talking about. For both participants and analysts, there is no need to posit a larger structure with arguments that, some may claim, has been reduced to this predicate construction.

The extract in (23) provides another example of indeterminacy.

- (23) a. Hally: *Kan,*
PART
'You know,'
- b. *kalau air putih mah,*
if drinking.water PART.SUN
'As for drinking water,'
- c. *tiap hari juga di .. ruma=h Teh.*
every day EMPH at home sister.SUN
'every single day at home Teh.'
- d. *Atuh ari kita ke sini mah,*
PART.SUN if.SUN 1PL to here PART.SUN
'Gosh when we come here,'
- e. *agak-agak beda.*
rather different
'kind of different.'
- f. *gitu=.*
like.that
'like that.' [Chicken Foot Soup 203–208]

Here some friends are sitting in a food court discussing what they will order. In lines a.-c. Hally says that she has water at home every day. In lines d.-f. she then suggests that it would therefore be nice to have something different while they are out having lunch. This second segment consists of: line d., a framing clause with the Sundanese⁹ conditional marker *ari* ‘if, when, given’, which could be rendered in English as ‘If we come here’, ‘When we come here’, or possibly more accurately ‘Given that we have come here’; followed by line e., the predicate *agak-agak beda* ‘rather different’ with no explicit argument; finished with line f., the common colloquial turn-final particle *gitu* ‘like that’. While Hally’s intention is completely clear, it is impossible to determine what specific argument is “not said” in line e. What is different? Hally’s desire, her order, the drink she does not yet have? As previously shown in the discussion of Examples (18) and (19), Indonesian conversational interaction is such that inferable concepts like *pengen-nya* ‘the desire’, *pesan-nya* ‘the order’ or *minum-nya* ‘the drink’ are all reasonable possible referents for an argument of *agak-agak beda*. Because it is indeterminate what referent might fulfil this role, there is nothing that can be said to have been omitted. *Agak-agak beda* does not have an ellipted argument, rather as a predicate it is a full and complete construction, appropriate and understandable at this point in the interaction.

Together with a general introduction to the nature of predicate constructions in conversational Indonesian, this section has made three key points. First, that unattached nominals, unattached prepositional phrases and other unattached elements, when functioning predicatively, are in fact grammatical predicates in Indonesian. This is different from other languages for which predicating unattached elements seem not to be predicates, (e.g. English (Ono & Thompson 1994), Finnish (Helasvuo 2001) and Mandarin (Tao 1996)). This difference is due to the grammatical affordances of Indonesian as discussed in Section 2.2. The second point is that Indonesian has structural means for bringing the focus of assertion into the grammatical predicate position (as illustrated in (18) and (19)) and that in conversational interaction Indonesian speakers regularly make use of such structures. Finally, the third point is that for Indonesian, it is not appropriate to consider a predicate standing on its own to be a reduced form of a larger clause. It is usually impossible to determine in any empirically meaningful way what such a source clause would be. Any reconstruction of a clausal source for a predicate construction is speculative. Taken together, these points indicate the centrality to the grammar of Indonesian of predicates of all kinds – rather than verbs or predicate-argument relationships.

9. These data are from Bandung, where the regional language is Sundanese. Many Bandung speakers will, from time to time, mix in some elements of Sundanese (and other languages) when predominately speaking Indonesian (Ewing 2020).

3. Frequency and distribution of predicate configurations in conversation

In this section I first present the results from counts conducted for predicates in a database of Indonesian conversational data. I then provide three excerpts of conversational interaction to illustrate how a variety of predicate constructions – including predicates alone and predicates with explicit arguments – are used by speakers in interaction. The data used for the count of predicate constructions comprise a total of 1,500 intonations units (IUs, see Du Bois et al. 1993). These were selected by the random selection of 300 contiguous IUs from each of five transcripts in a corpus comprising recordings of naturally occurring conversations among young Indonesian adults (aged 18–25 years) made in Bandung, Indonesia in early 2014. The conversations each involve from two to nine speakers and include all-female and mixed female-male groups. This selection included a total of 698 predicate expressions. Table 1 shows the frequency of the two major predicate construction types in the data. “Predicate” indicates verbal and non-verbal predicates that do not have explicit arguments, as illustrated above in (4)–(6) and (11)–(14). “Predicate plus (some) argument(s)” refers to verbal and non-verbal predicates that have at least one explicit argument such as those illustrated in (1)–(3) and (7)–(10). These include intransitive constructions with one explicit argument, transitive constructions with two (or more) explicit arguments as well as transitive constructions with only one explicit argument. The results in Table 1 show that predicates without any explicit arguments outnumber predicates with some sort of explicit argument(s) nearly two to one. That is, in the Indonesian conversational data, just over one third (34%) of the predicates are part of structures that include at least one overt argument, while nearly two thirds (66%) are produced without any overt arguments. This preponderance of predicates without explicit arguments is similar to the situation found in Japanese and markedly different from some other languages, for example Finnish and English (see discussion in Laury, Ono & Suzuki, this volume).

Table 1. Frequency of major predicate format types

Predicate construction type	N	%
Predicate	464	66%
Predicate plus (some) argument(s)	234	34%
TOTAL	698	100%

The following three examples present short extracts from extended conversations to illustrate how speakers move between different predicate construction

types. These illustrate both the importance of predicate constructions and the emergent nature of constructions that include both predicates and arguments.

- (24) a. Asmita: *tapi kayanya aku .. mulai meny-(s)uka-i-nya* <@ ketika @>,
 but it.seems 1SG start AT-like-APPL-3 when
 ‘But it seems I started to like them when,
- b. .. *kita jual-an* <@ boneka,
 1PL sell-DETRAN plush.toy
 ‘we sold plush toys,
- c. *gitu* @>.
 like.that
 ‘like that.’
- d. @@@
- e. Wida: *Laris*.
 sell.well
 ‘(They) sell well.’ [Plush Toys 1327–1331]

Example (24) contrasts two tightly produced clauses and a predicate-only construction. Lines a. and b. contain two clauses with verbs and a range of explicit arguments and complements. In line a. the predicate is the transitive verb with A-trigger prefix and applicative suffix, *menyukai* ‘to like’. Its A-argument is expressed as *aku* ‘1SG’ and the P-argument is expressed as enclitic *-nya* ‘3’. In line b. the predicate is the verb *jualan* ‘to deal in, do business by selling things’. The S-argument is *kita* ‘1PL’ and *boneka* ‘doll, plush toy’ is an element described in Sneddon et al. as a complement, “which resembles an object but cannot become the subject of a passive clause” (2010:274). That is, while *kita jualan boneka* can be most idiomatically translated into English with ‘we sold plush toys’, the low transitivity of the Indonesian construction suggests something more generalised like ‘we were engaged in plush-toy-selling’. It is the suffix *-an*¹⁰ that imparts low-transitivity to the base *jual* ‘sell’. Asmita then finishes her turn with the adverbial *gitu* ‘like that’, a common marker of turn completion in Indonesian conversation. Wida’s turn consists of a predicate with no overt arguments, the single verb *laris* ‘to sell well, be popular’. We can understand that Wida means something like ‘the toys sold well’ or ‘you sold lots of toys’, but this understanding comes through pragmatic inferencing: no argument is mentioned explicitly and there is no morphological marking or syntactic argument-sharing convention that points to any particular referent that can be understood as an S-argument. Indonesian conversational interaction commonly presents just such a shifting flow between, on the

10. The standard form would be *berjualan*, with affixation *ber-...-an*.

one hand, clauses with explicit arguments, often including verb morphology that indicates argument structure, and on the other, predicates without overt arguments and often without any of the overt morphology that might imply some sort of clause structure.

It is also common for speakers to produce only predicates without explicit arguments over long stretches of interaction. This is illustrated in Excerpt (25). Here, in a different speech situation, the same speaker, Asmita, is talking with Fakri, whom she is just now meeting for the first time. This interaction takes place in a university study area where Fakri has indicated non-verbally that he wants to use study space near Asmita. The interaction begins with Asmita saying it is okay for him to join her, followed by Fakri explaining that he wants to charge his mobile phone. The key point to note is that no explicit arguments or argument-like elements of any kind are expressed in this extract. The entire excerpt consists of stand-alone predicates with no arguments, augmented only by a few discourse particles.

- (25) a. Asmita: *Boleh=*.
 can
 ‘can.’
- b. Fakri: *N-(t)umpang nge-cas*.
 AT-join AT-charge
 ‘join in and charge.’
- c. *.. Iya=*.
 Yes
 ‘Yes.’
- d. Fakri: *Oh iya gampang*.
 oh yes easy
 ‘Oh yeah easy.’
- e. *Gampang*.
 easy
 ‘Easy.’
 ...(8.6)
- f. Fakri: *Dari jurusan mana?*
 from department which
 ‘From what department?’
- g. Asmita: *.. E=h*,
 uh
 ‘uh.’

- h. *Desain Interior.*
design interior
'Interior Design.'
- i. Fakri: .. *Desain Interior* [ya].
design interior yes
'Oh Interior Design.'
- j. Asmita: [*Iya Desain*] *Interior.*
yes design interior
'Yeah Interior Design.'
- k. Fakri: ... *Angkatan?*
cohort
'Cohort?'
- l. Asmita: .. *Angkata=n dua ribu sebelas.*
cohort two thousand eleven
'Cohort of 2011.'
- m. Fakri: .. *Dua ribu* [sebelas].
two thousand eleven
'2011.'
- n. Asmita: [*Ya*].
yes
'Yes.'
- o. Fakri: *Wah.*
gosh
'Gosh.' [Just Met 2-17]

In contrast, what is *not* common in the data are extended segments of talk where a long series of clauses with explicit arguments is produced. In the coded data, the longest stretch of consecutive clause constructions with explicit arguments was five clauses. Much more common is for only a few clauses with explicit arguments to occur, followed by a series of predicates with no arguments. Example (26) illustrates a stretch of four clauses with arguments – three produced by one speaker, followed by one by another speaker. This is followed by a series of three predicates without arguments.

- (26) a. Hally: .. *Katanya boleh bawa KTP doang,*
say-DEF can bring identity.card only
'They said (I) only needed to bring (my) identity card,'
- b. .. *tapi pas kemarin aku ke TPS,*
but when yesterday 1SG to polling.booth
'but when I went to the polling booth yesterday,'

- c. *harus ng-ambil A-lima.*
 must AT-take A-five
 '(I) had to get an A-5.'
- d. Salma: .. *Apa A-lima?*
 what A-five
 'What's an A-5?'
- e. Hally: .. *Kaya=k formulir pemindahan gitu.*
 like form transfer like.that
 '(It's) a kind of transfer form.'
- f. Unun: ... *Mau ke Cirebon ih=.*
 FUT to Cirebon EXCL
 'Gosh (you)'ll (go) to Cirebon.'
- g. Sita: .. *Emang di sini nggak bisa?*
 indeed at here NEG can
 '(You) really can't (vote) here?'[Just Chatting 294–300]

Example (26) is from a sequence in the conversation in which some students are talking about the national elections taking place in Indonesia at the time. Here Hally is narrating the difficulties she has had in registering to vote where she currently resides for university rather than at her place of permanent residence. The first three lines retell events as a kind of mini narrative using clauses with explicit arguments. Line a. has the verb *bawa* 'bring' with the explicit P-argument *KTP* 'identity card' (while the A-argument is only implied). Line b. has the prepositional phrase predicate *ke TPS* 'to the polling booth' with the explicit S-argument *aku* '1SG'. Line c. has the verb *ngambil* 'take, get' with the P-argument *A lima* 'A-5' (an A-5 size form authorising the transfer of voter registration). Salma then asks for clarification in line d., using a clause comprising the predicate nominal *apa* 'what' and S-argument *A lima* 'A-5'. Lines e.-g. then revolve around clarification and evaluation, rather than narrative events, and they comprise predicate constructions without arguments. An overview of the data suggests that narratives within conversation are a common location for explicit clausal constructions, although by no means the only one. (A more detailed analysis of the discourse functions and interactional motivations related to use of clause constructions vis-à-vis predicates without arguments in the context of expository and interpersonal styles can be found in Djenar, Ewing & Manns (2018: 141–148).)

In these examples we have seen predicates standing alone – which for Indonesian have been shown to be complete formats in their own right – and predicates that are tightly linked morphosyntactically to arguments, forming explicit clause structures. Constructions also occur in which nominals are associated with predicates, but in a looser way. These more loosely connected nominals are often serving

a topic-like function, which can be explicitly signaled with a topic marker such as *kalau*, as in Example (27) (and also seen in (19), (21) lines a. and e. and (23) line b.).

- (27) a. Wulan: *Kalau sekoteng*,
 if k.o. ginger drink
 ‘As for *sekoteng*,’
 b. *me-mabuk-kan?*
 AT-drunk-CAUSE
 ‘(does it) make (you) drunk?’ [Just Chatting 981–982]

In this example the participants are discussing the intoxicating effects of beer and various indigenous foods such as fermented cassava. In (27) Wulan asks whether the ginger drink *sekoteng* is also intoxicating. She introduces the referent *sekoteng* in the topic phrase in line a. This is followed by the predicate *memabukkan* ‘make drunk’. In this case *sekoteng* is coreferential with the understood A-argument of *memabukkan*. Because the nominal *sekoteng* is set off in a morphologically marked topic phrase it is not a grammatical argument of the verb *memabukkan*. However, it would be unusual to explicitly restate this referent in the following line, even with a pronominal form, so it is not appropriate to say that an argument referring to *sekoteng* has been elided in line b. Rather the topic sets up a frame or context in which the following predicate-only construction can be understood. The framing role of a topic in order to facilitate the pragmatic inferring that makes a following comment understandable was also seen in (23) where the topic *air putih* ‘drinking water’ sets up a frame by which what follows is interpretable. In that case, however, *air putih* does not have any sort of potential grammatical relationship with the following predicates. This further illustrates the looser, pragmatic rather than grammatical, association typical of topic-comment constructions.

Example (28), previously seen in (15), is a more complex structure in which two referents are established, followed by two predicate nominals and finally a reformulation of one of the referents. In line a. Febri introduces two referents, *ini* ‘this’ indicating something she is looking at on her device and *yang bikin* ‘the one who makes’. The Sundanese particle *mah* is a contrastive topic marker and the entire line can be heard as presenting the two referents as two topics which will frame what is to come. The following two lines each contain a non-verbal predicate expressing the possible origin of the app developers. Finally in line d., Febri clarifies that what she is talking about are apps of this kind in general, rather than, for example, one specific app. As Febri produces her turn, the relationships between referents and predicates are pragmatically interpretable, but are not signaled by any of the explicit morphosyntactic means used to form tight clause structures.

- (28) a. Febri: *Ini mah yang bikin,*
 this PART.SUN YANG make
 ‘as for this the one who makes (it);’
- b. *kalau ga yang dari Korea,*
 if NEG YANG from Korea
 ‘if (they) are not the one from Korea,’
- c. *Jepang ya?*
 Japan yeah
 ‘(they are from) Japan right?’
- d. .. *aplikasi ginian.*
 application like.this
 ‘this kind of application.’[K-Pop 552–555]

Example (29) is from an exchange in which two friends, Puji and Faizah, are talking about Faizah’s ex-boyfriend, Obed, who mistakenly thinks Faizah wants to get back together with him. Faizah has been recounting an encounter she had with Obed, and now in (29) Puji is demonstrating that she is following Faizah’s story by suggesting that Obed must have been excited during the encounter. In line a., Puji produces a predicate which is posed as a question and forms a turn-constructural unit (TCU), that is, a possible complete turn (see Clayman 2012 for discussion of TCUs). After a short pause Puji then produces a nominal as a continuation of her turn (see Section 4.2.3 for a more detailed discussion of turn continuations). As analysts looking at the transcript of this utterance, we could interpret *Obednya* ‘Obed’¹¹ as the S-argument of *excited banget* ‘very excited’. However such an atemporal analysis misses a key feature of Interactional Linguistic analysis: the recognition that speakers produce language sequentially in real time. (On the importance of temporality for analysing interaction see chapters in Deppermann & Günthner 2015.) From this perspective, line a. was produced as a predicate-only construction. This analysis is supported by the final appeal intonation pattern marked by the question mark and the following pause. Line b. is a continuation, which adds further information and aids the hearer in interpreting what has been said. It is in fact not possible to say that these two intonation units were produced as a unitary clause in real time. The possibility of a grammatical connection between the predicate and an explicit argument only emerges over time.

11. On a proper name, *-nya* functions to indicate contrast; in this case, Obed rather than, for example, Faizah.

- (29) a. Puji: *Excited banget ya?*
 excited.ENG very yeah
 ‘Really excited huh?’
- b. .. *Obed-nya.*
 Obed-DEF
 ‘Obed.’[Rapidograph Saga185–186]

When we compare the structures in (27)–(29) with the tightly produced clauses in (1)–(3) and (7)–(10) and with the predicate-only constructions in (4)–(6) and (11)–(14) (and many other examples presented here), we see a cline of tighter and looser associations between nominals and predicates. This cline varies along parameters of intonation, word order, morphology and possible syntactic macro-roles. It is in this sense that clauses – understood as tightly structured constructions including a predicate with its argument(s) – can be seen to emerge in interaction, as speakers produce nominals that are linked to predicates with greater or lesser degrees of pragmatic, intonational, morphological or syntactic connectedness. What I have not done here is look at how clause formats might emerge differently for different predicate types. As noted in reference to Example (2), P-trigger predicates rarely have explicit A- or P-arguments. In contrast, A-trigger predicates have a higher frequency of explicit P-arguments. Looking at such trends across all predicate types and the possible usage-based explanations for such differences would be a fruitful area for future research.

In summary, if most of Indonesian conversational space were filled with clauses consisting of predicates with explicit arguments (as in (24a–b) and (26a–d)), then it might make sense to consider the clause a robust grammatical unit and a major building block of conversational discourse. If that were the case, we would also be justified in conceptualising examples of predicates without arguments (as in (24c) and (e), (25a–o) and (26e–g)) as instances of clauses in which arguments have not been overtly expressed, but which can be reconstructed from context. As mentioned above, this is the perspective often taken in discussions of Indonesian grammar (e.g. De Heer 1975; Ewing 2005a; Macdonald and Darjowijojo 1967; Sneddon 2006; Sneddon et al. 2010; Wolff 1986 is an exception as he appears to take the predicate rather than the clause as a starting point, similar to the analysis here). Such an analysis would support the role of the clause as the basic unit of grammar in Indonesian conversation (and presumably other Indonesian discourse types and genres), since all predicating activity can be viewed as fundamentally representing clausal structures, whether fully expressed or having undergone elision. However, I hope to have shown through the discussion above that such an approach is not appropriate, at least not for an analysis of the grammar of colloquial Indonesian in conversational interaction. Rather,

the more parsimonious analysis is that the basic structural building block in the grammar of Indonesian conversation is the predicate. If we take the call to study the grammar of a language on that language's own terms seriously then we should see the Indonesian predicate as the basic unit and building block that pervades conversational space, while Indonesian clauses are as a sub-type of predicate construction, ones to which other, non-predicating material, specifically arguments, has accrued. Thus, what in the past has been taken as the key unit for understanding Indonesian grammatical structure, the clause, now appears to be something that emerges from language in use as one of the less frequent (but nonetheless still important) ways of configuring predicates.

4. Predicates in interaction

Sections 2 and 3 have presented structural and quantitative discourse evidence that predicates are the locus of grammar in Indonesian conversation, and that the larger, less frequent clausal grammatical constructions that also occur in conversational interaction are better viewed as predicates to which additional material (for example explicitly expressed arguments) has accrued – predicates plus something extra. In this section, evidence from interaction will be examined to show that the predicate is not only the grammatical locus of colloquial Indonesian, but also its interactional locus. First I will show how predicates, more so than clauses, are central to the construction of turn units in real time. Second, I will examine the three aspects of participant orientation discussed by Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) for English and Japanese – turn taking, joint completions and extensions – and show how in each of these interactional domains Indonesian speakers orient to predicates.

4.1 Turn constructions and predicates

We have previously seen examples in which the construction of turns and social actions are based around predicates. These include clarification of a referent (11), answers to questions (26) and other kinds of responses (24), and the extended series of getting-to-know-you exchanges we saw in (25). In (30) we return to the sequence about ordering a drink, first presented in (23). Here we examine how a single complex turn can be built up around predicates. This further demonstrates that even when there is other material, including an explicit argument and a topic, it is predicates that drive the turn forward, rather than clausal structures that relate predicates to explicit arguments.

- (30) a. Hally: *Kan*,
 PART
 ‘You know,’
- b. *kalau air putih mah*,
 if drinking.water PART.SUN
 ‘As for drinking water,’
- c. *tiap hari juga di .. ruma=h Teh*.
 every day EMPH at home sister.SUN
 ‘(I have it) every single day at home *Teh*.’
- d. *Atuh ari kita ke sini mah*,
 PART.SUN if.SUN 1PL to here PART.SUN
 ‘Gosh when we come here,’
- e. *agak-agak beda*.
 rather different
 ‘kind of different.’
- f. *gitu=*.
 like.that
 ‘like that.’ [Chicken Foot Soup 203–208]

Line b. presents the topic *air putih* ‘drinking water’, followed in line c. with a temporal phrase, *tiap hari* ‘every day’, and a locative phrase, *di rumah* ‘at home’. Each of these phrases asserts something (time and location) and can thus be viewed as predicating. Such adverbial phrases have also been shown to commonly function as non-verbal predicates in Indonesian and in the absence of other explicit grammatical marking they can both be considered to function as predicates. The relationship between the topic and these predicates is pragmatic, not grammatical. That is (unlike some other examples of topic constructions) no clear syntactic link can be drawn between *air putih* and *di rumah*. In order to produce a syntactically connected clause with these elements, other material would need to be inserted, producing the Indonesian equivalent of something like ‘I have water every day at home’, ‘Water is all there is every day at home’ or ‘Mum serves water every day’. The point is, there is no evidence that any particular clause is the source from which this utterance could be said to derive. The topic is juxtaposed with the predicates and the speaker’s intention can be adequately inferred. Line d. contains a clause with the prepositional phrase predicate *ke sini* ‘to here’ and the S-argument *kita* ‘1PL’; this is part of the adverbial clause meaning ‘when we come here’. The point of Hally’s turn becomes clear when she asserts that what she hopes is the case ‘when we come here’ is that something should be ‘different’. This assertion is made in line e., which consists of the predicate *agak-agak beda* ‘kind of different’ with no overt arguments. What Hally would like is something differ-

ent to drink. Notice that while this meaning is pragmatically clear from context, nothing in the immediately preceding or following discourse is co-referential with a potential argument of *beda* ‘(be) different’. This predicate without arguments expresses the key point Hally makes in her turn, supported by the pragmatically linked topic *air putih* ‘water’ (line b), the two other predicates without arguments *tiap hari* ‘every day’ and *di rumah* ‘at home’ along with the adverbial clause *ari kita ke sini mah*, ‘when we come here’, which includes both predicate and argument. The key social action of this turn, to assert that Hally wants to have something other than simply drinking water, is expressed by a predicate alone and is supported by other predicate structures, most without arguments. Indeed the key concept of turn – what Hally wants to order for her drink – is only implied and has no explicit expression at all.

4.2 Participant orientation and predicates

Further evidence that predicates are an important locus of interaction comes from examining participant orientation. Language users orient to stretches of talk “as organisational units for the participants in constructing and interpreting talk in interaction” (Emanuel Schegloff in Čmejrková & Prevignano 2003: 26). Thus, examining the ways in which speakers position their contributions in relation to their interlocutors’ talk can help demonstrate structural organisation in terms of turn taking and grammatical organisation. Three aspects of participant orientation are examined: next turn onset, joint utterance completion and turn continuations. Each of these is closely tied to projectability and temporality, two key concepts which have been extensively developed within the framework of Conversation Analysis. Projectability has to do with how language that is produced at a given moment in interaction can project possible likely further language to follow (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Auer 2005). Projectability has been shown to be a property of language that is crucial for speakers to anticipate possible completions of turns and thus possible points of speaker change (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002). Temporality has to do with the fact that utterances are produced in real time, element-by-element, which has important consequences for how participants hear and respond to speech and for how analysts can best approach the study of language (Goodwin 1995; Du Bois and Kärkkäinen 2012; Enfield 2011).

4.2.1 Next turn onset

Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen observe for Japanese that “next-turn responses come *no sooner than* but also *no later than* the (final) predicate” (2005: 490, emphasis in original). A similar observation can be made for Indonesian. An

important point of difference is that, whereas for Japanese Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) point out that this pattern is occasioned by the predicate-final nature of Japanese, for Indonesian it is the propensity of predicate-only constructions which gives rise to a similar phenomenon. This can be observed in several of the previous examples, where change of speaker occurs regularly and seamlessly after the completion of a predicate. Of course, when a clause format of predicate plus (some) argument(s) is produced, participants can also orient to this as in lines c.-d. of (26). However, the majority of TCUs end with predicate-only constructions, as illustrated in the remaining lines of (26), and so most points of speaker change occur after such a predicate-only format.

It has also been shown that across languages material produced after a point of possible turn completion is precisely the point at which overlap can occur unproblematically. Jefferson points out that “a recipient/next speaker can be seen to be orienting to, monitoring for, and acting upon arrival of an utterance-in-progress at a state of syntactic completedness, and thus at a state of possible utterance completedness, and thus at a possible transition place; i.e., a place where speaker transition can, may, should occur” (1984: 12, emphasis in original). She further observes that much of the overlap that occurs in conversation is a “byproduct” of the next speaker beginning a turn just as first speaker has reached a point of possible completion, but continues speaking. Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) provide evidence that by examining the linguistic structures that typically occur at these points of overlap, we can gain insight into what grammatical formats speakers are orienting to during interaction. Their conclusion is that for both English and Japanese speakers it is the clause, although they point out that in the case of Japanese speakers it is often the “key element” (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005: 485) of the clause – that is, the predicate – that speakers are orienting to.

For Indonesian, I am claiming that speakers particularly orient to the predicate and this can be seen with unproblematic overlap, which regularly occurs just after a predicate is produced. The frequency of predicate-only constructions has been emphasised, but it should also be remembered that approximately one third of predicates in the data are associated with some sort of explicit argument(s). The first two lines of (31) each contain a Predicate-Argument clause construction. In line a. the argument *settingannya* ‘the settings’ is the P-argument of the verb *bikin* ‘make’; in line b. *semuanya* ‘all of them’ is the S-argument of the time adverbial predicate *dari awal* ‘from the beginning’. Note that Asimta’s overlapping response begins precisely when Amru has produced the predicate in line b., a point at which he could have stopped and been heard as having produced a complete, well-formed grammatical construction. Asmita begins her turn at this point. It is because Amru continues to add something extra to his predicate, an explicit S-argument, that overlap occurs.

- (31) a. Amru: *bikin dulu setting-an-nya.*
 make first setting.ENG-NOM-DEF
 ‘(you should) do the settings first.’
- b. *dari awal [semua-nya].*
 from start all-DEF
 ‘all of them from the beginning.’
- c. Amsita: [Iyah ha].
 yes oh
 ‘Yeah okay.’[Plush Toys 1165–1167]

Example (32) similarly shows overlap at the point when a predicate is complete.

- (32) a. Asmita: *Berapaan-nya?*
 how.much-DEF
 ‘How much (will it cost)?’
- b. *Takut-nya se-ribu sampe dua ribu euy,*
 fear-DEF one-thousand until two thousand PART.SUN
 ‘(I’m) afraid (it will cost) one thousand to two thousand (rupiah);’
- c. [*bahan-nya.*]
 ingredient-DEF
 ‘the ingredients.’
- d. Bayu: [Tapi tapi] *nggak akan lah.*
 but but NEG FUT PART
 ‘But (it) won’t be.’ [Cream Soup 123–126]

In line b. of (32) Asmita has produced the predicate nominal *seribu sampe dua ribu* ‘one thousand to two thousand (rupiah)’, framed by the adverbial *takutnya*, something like ‘I’m afraid that’ or ‘the worrying thing is’ (see Englebretson 2003:153–186 on Indonesian epistemic adverbial frames with *-nya*). It is at this point, line d., that Bayu begins his turn. Overlap occurs because Asmita continues with another intonation unit in line c., which provides a nominal co-referential with the previously unstated S-argument of the predicate in line b. Despite the fact that this nominal has not yet been produced, Bayu hears the predicate expressed in line b. as understandable and complete, such that he can begin a new turn.

4.2.2 Joint utterance completion

Speakers often engage in the collaborative production of language, where one speaker will complete the utterance of their fellow interlocutor (Lerner 1991). Two principal patterns for this are for a second speaker to produce the last few words of the first speaker’s mono-clause format or to produce the second clause of a

multi-clause format. Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) observe both modes of joint utterance completion in their English and Japanese data, but they note that the most frequent manner of joint turn construction in Japanese is for a collaborating speaker to provide the terminal element of a mono-clausal format begun by their speech partner. Due to the nature of Japanese grammar, such a terminal element is frequently a predicate, and thus the second speaker “completes” a clause started with nominal or other elements by the first speaker. In Indonesian, with a preponderance of predicate-only formats, we see that joint completion is typically a matter of a speaker producing a predicate which completes a multi-predicate construction started by the other speaker.

Example (33) involves a two-part framing construction in which the first part sets up a context which provides a frame within which the subsequent assertion holds (Ewing 2015b). Here Febri’s frame involves the context of looking at a dictionary (by which she means trying to do some rigorous study) and is marked by *kalau* ‘if, when, given.’ This frame sets up an expectation that a relevant assertion will follow. In this case, the second part of the framing construction is produced collaboratively by Dinda who supplies her version of the second part of the construction, *suka males* ‘usually don’t feel in the mood’ a split second before Febri completes the construction with the same predicate, modified by a different adverbial, *malah males* ‘really don’t feel in the mood’.

- (33) a. Febri: .. *Kalau buka kamus* [gitu teh,
if open dictionary like.that PART.SUN
‘When (you) look at a dictionary,’
- b. Dinda: [Suka .. *male=s*].
often reluctant
‘(you) usually don’t feel in the mood (to study).’
- c. Febri: *malah male=s*].
in.fact Reluctant
‘(you) really don’t feel in the mood (to study).’ [K-Pop 1175–1177]

Three points can be observed about the joint completion in (33). First, the collaborative construction is produced with predicate-only formats. While the first segment of the framing construction (line a.) contains a predicate and P-argument (but no A-argument), the second segment of the framing construction is a predicate-only format (produced by Dinda in line b. and by Febri in line c.). Second, not only the form but also the production of the joint completion orients to the predicate. While Febri produces her complete two-part utterance fluently without pause, it is interesting that Dinda does not produce her version of the

second part simultaneously with Febri's second part. Rather she begins it earlier, immediately after Febri has completed the phrase *buka kamus* 'look at a dictionary' and in overlap with the IU-final particles *gitu teh* (meaning approximately 'like that you know'). This overlap during joint completion is at the same point where we observed overlap at change of turn and is similarly oriented to the predicate. Note the alignment between speakers that occurs through the coordination of this joint completion. Dinda begins her second element overlapping with the end of Febri's first element, but her pause in line b. and the fact that both speakers lengthen *males* 'lazy, reluctant, not in the mood' mean that they end simultaneously. Third, we can observe the intersubjective advantage that producing predicates without explicit arguments can have for speakers. The English free translation of this interaction requires explicit subjects for the sake of "grammaticality" but deciding what subject to include is not straightforward. Generic 'you', as seen in the translation of (33), may be the closest way English can represent the lack of arguments in the Indonesian original, but it is still off the mark. Febri's utterance could also have been accurately translated with 'I' as it is clear she is expressing her own personal experience. In this case Dinda's utterance could have been translated with 'you' to express her understanding of Febri's position or even with 'I' to show sympathetic alignment with Febri's position. By using a predicate with no explicit argument they are essentially able to say 'I', 'you' and 'one' simultaneously and thus create an engaged sense of intersubjectivity that could not be achieved in quite the same way in English.

4.2.3 *Turn continuations*

The continuation of a turn after it has reached a point of possible completion is a common feature of interaction across languages (Auer 1996; Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002; Schegloff 1996). There are a number of ways that turns can be extended and these can be categorised according to the extent to which the continuation can be viewed as linking grammatically back to the host utterance. Languages have been shown to differ in terms of the kinds of continuations or extensions speakers most frequently make and these differences can be attributed at least in part to the grammatical affordances of particular languages (Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007). Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) examine increments produced by speakers of English and Japanese. Increments are "a nonmain-clause continuation after a possible point of turn completion" (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002: 16). Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005) show that while English and Japanese speakers differ in the kinds of extensions they most frequently use, they consistently orient to clause formats. English speakers regularly produce increments that are additions to the full clauses produced in the initial TCU. Japanese speakers tend to produce increments that are the explicit

expression of an argument that had not originally been expressed with a predicate in the initial TCU. Indonesian speakers similarly will add an explicit argument as an increment after its predicate has appeared in a completed TCU. Just such a continuation is illustrated in Example (29) in the earlier discussion of the emergent nature of clauses. A similar format can be seen in (34). However, this example is different from (29) because the nominal element in the incremental portion of the last line does not represent a potential argument for either of the preceding two predicates. Prior to the utterance in (34), Daud has said that his thesis supervisor is young and unpretentious. In (34) Daud illustrates this point by saying that the supervisor meets with his students informally while smoking outside of the office. *Bimbingannya* refers to the process of supervision, whereas the actor(s) understood to be participating in the actions of the two predicates would be Daud (and/or students more generally) and/or his supervisor.

- (34) a. Daud: .. *Masih nongkrong*,
 still hang.out
 ‘still hanging out,’
 b. *sambil ngerokok*,
 while smoke
 ‘while smoking,’
 c. <@ *bimbing-an-nya* @>.
 supervise-NOM-DEF
 ‘the supervision.’[Plush Toys 1433–1435]

The nominal element in line c. of (34) provides a context for understanding the prior assertion, but it does not provide a grammatical argument for these predicates. That is, it is not grammatically integrated with these predicates and therefore might not be characterisable as an increment. However, it does extend the TCU with a pragmatically relevant addition, functioning like a topic, similar to that seen in (30). This further supports the claim that the predicate is the locus of Indonesian grammar in interaction. A complete TCU can comprise a predicate alone and an extension can add some additional, pragmatically augmenting or contextualising material to the predicate, without necessarily creating a clause-like structure.

Finally, overlap typically occurs at precisely the point when an increment is added and thus shows speaker orientation to the predicate structure of the preceding TCU. This is illustrated in (35), where Asmita’s request for clarification occurs immediately after Bayu produces a two-part predicate format and thus overlaps with the contextualising nominal that Bayu adds incrementally.

- (35) a. Bayu: .. *Mending enak*,
 better tasty
 ‘(Is it) better to be tasty,’
- b. *mending banyak?*
 better many
 ‘or to have lots of things?’
- c. [*Menu-nya*].
 menu-DEF
 ‘for the menu.’
- d. Asmita: [*Heh*]?
 huh
 ‘Huh?’
- e. Bayu: ... *kamu mending enak?*
 2SG better tasty
 ‘You (think it’s) better (if it’s) tasty?’
- f. Asmita: *mending enak da*.
 better tasty PART.SUN
 ‘(It’s) better tasty of course.’[Cream Soup 188–193]

Bayu’s contribution is potentially complete at the end of b.; however, Asmita is not sure what his intention is, and so she asks for clarification in line d. Asmita has heard Bayu’s contribution as potentially complete, albeit unclear, and thus she seeks clarification precisely when he completes the predicate. This request for clarification actually overlaps with Bayu’s production of a nominal that is a continuation of his turn and that can be heard as co-referential with a potential S-argument of the predicate he just produced. Example (35) further illustrates the structural and interactional importance of predicates by again presenting nominals that have possible, but ultimately indeterminate, relationships to these predicates. In lines a.-c., Bayu appears to present ‘the menu’ as thematic trigger/topic of the predicates *mending enak* ‘better tasty’ and *mending banyak* ‘better lots’. Yet in his repetition in line e., he places Asmita (*kamu* ‘2SG’) in the position of experiential trigger/topic of *mending enak* ‘better tasty’. When Asmita responds with only a predicate in f., there is no way to reconstruct whether she “intends” the trigger of her utterance to be *menu*, which would mirror Bayu’s original question and would be the structural-semantic relationship that more commonly holds between *mending* and a trigger/topic, or herself which would mirror the structure of Bayu’s second question. It is in fact indeterminate and ultimately irrelevant which is “really” the argument. Asmita’s intention is clear: it is both in her opinion *and* as regards the menu that tasty is better. Indeed, this ability to express predicates without arguments affords speakers of Indonesian opportunities to produce utterances which

can communicate in such wide-ranging and nuanced ways, without the need to be pigeon-holed into one specific understanding or another.

5. Conclusion

Descriptions of Indonesian that take the standard language as their starting point for analysing colloquial spoken language also take the clause (or “complete sentence”) as the starting point for analysing grammatical structure and must call on ellipsis – “the omission from a sentence of a word when its presence is not necessary” (Sneddon 2006:109) – in order to account for the way speakers actually use language in interaction. With this discussion I hope to have shown that such a position does not reflect the way speakers actually use language and that the predicate, rather than the clause, plays a central role in the grammar of Indonesian conversation. First, the preponderance of predicates in the data that do not have arguments suggests that this format is best viewed as the default. Further, when a predicate is produced without overt arguments, the reconstruction of erstwhile arguments that could be understood to have been elided can be shown time and again to be ambiguous or indeterminate. Not only does the hypothetical reconstruction of possible arguments, and with them clausal structures, often seem to be irrelevant to speakers, it is also often the case that the ability to imply multiple possible understandings simultaneously – something afforded by the frequent use of predicate-only formats – can be communicatively beneficial to speakers. Finally, and most importantly from the perspective of Interactional Linguistics, I examined turn-taking, overlap and incrementing in conversation to show that predicates, rather than full clauses, are the grammatical format participants regularly orient to as they engage with each other conversationally in Indonesian. As speakers build turns-at-talk sequentially in real time, the tendency for speakers to produce predicates plus extra material means that from time to time clause-like structures emerge through interaction. Nonetheless, the predicate maintains its position as a principal locus of both grammar and interaction.

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Glosses

1PL	first person plural
1SG	first person singular
2SG	second person singular
APPL	Applicative
AT	A-trigger
CAUSE	Causative
DEF	Definite
DETRAN	Detransitiviser
EMPH	emphasis particle
ENG	English
EXCL	Exclamative
EXIST	Existential
FUT	Future
k.o.	kind of
MID	middle voice
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominaliser
PART	discourse particle
PT	P-trigger
REDUP	Reduplication
YANG	<i>yang</i> nominalising particle (produces ad hoc or contrastive NPs, also used in relative clause constructions)
SUN	Sundanese
TITLE	personal title

Transcription conventions

- . final intonation contour
- , continuing intonation contour
- ? appeal intonation contour
- truncated intonation unit
- @ one pulse of laughter
- = prosodic lengthening
- .. short pause
- ... long pause
- (H) in-breath
- [ya] brackets for overlapping speech

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The chapters in this volume focus on how we might understand the concept of 'unit' in human languages. It is an analytical notion that has been widely adopted by linguists of various theoretical and applied orientations but has recently been critically examined by both typologically oriented and interactional linguistics. This volume contributes to and extends this discussion by examining the nature of units in actual usage in a range of genetically and typologically unrelated languages, English, Finnish, Indonesian, Japanese, and Mandarin, engaging with fundamental theoretical issues. The chapters show that categories originally created for the description of Indo-European languages have limited usefulness if our goal is to understand the nature of human language in general. The authors thus question the status of traditionally accepted linguistic units, especially their static understanding as a priori entities, and suggest instead that an emergent and interactional view of both structure and function offers a better fit with the data from the languages examined.

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