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Cultivating objects in interaction – visual motifs as meaning making practices in talk-in-interaction.

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Cultivating objects in interaction – visual motifs as meaning making practices

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Abstract
This chapter explores patterns of repeated orientations to physical objects in interactants’ visuo-spatial and haptic surround. A number of examples are presented from advice-giving activities in various institutional settings, where participants-in-interaction initially draw on material objects at hand while pursuing a particular line of explanation, and then return to these objects at later intervals. The analysis suggests that the objects are afforded representational properties through their being anchored to some referent in the talk, and that participants subsequently draw on these associations for describing, disambiguating or clarifying aspects of the relatively complex procedural frameworks discussed in the settings. This suggests that the temporal stability of material objects available to participants makes them an ideal resource to be developed as visual motifs.

1. Introduction

This study explores patterns of orientations to material objects as they are drawn upon as resources for symbolic representation in interaction. We observe how objects brought into play as constitutive elements in referential practices (Hanks, 1992), leave residual traces of a semantic affordance which can be further mobilised by participants in later episodes. In this way, an object, having been indexed in one particular way during a spate of interaction, retains this semantic charge. This in turn affords participants a resource for subsequent production of multilayered representations in the unfolding activity (Hutchins & Palen, 1997; Goodwin, 2003; Streeck, 2009a). We are interested here in how interactants develop reference over stretches of time within an activity, through their recurrent displayed orientations to the objects located in the setting. The analysis presented here suggests that such recurrent orientations are drawn on as composite leitmotifs which contribute to meaning-making practices in interaction.

Leitmotifs are traditionally associated with narrative art. They refer to a compositional technique where, for example in opera, a musical fragment, a prop or a colour scheme is associated with particular elements of the narrative, e.g. a character, an idea, or situation. These elements constitute resources that can be recycled at later stages to provide for narrative continuity and thematic complexity (e.g. Ho, 1994). Pertinent to the current volume, this study explores how objects brought into mutual elaboration with speech and embodied action can provide participants with a similar residual resource for later referential development across a stretch of everyday focused interaction.

According to Goodwin (for example 2000a, 2003a), mutual elaboration occurs at the intersection of different semiotic fields, where signs from different modalities are brought into a locally relevant semantic relationship. Such configurations have been explored most notably in Goodwin’s work on ‘environmentally coupled gestures’ (Goodwin, 2007a; 2007b), gestures that coordinate talk and features in the physical environment. Such research has been primarily concerned with describing the constitution of single instances as they feature in a spate of interaction (e.g. Goodwin 2003b, 2007a; Nishizaka 2006). It has been argued, however, that “a great deal of gestural depiction is sequential depiction, imagery being built up over time” (Streeck,
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2009b:206, emphasis in original; see also Enfield, 2004). This type of embodied social practice, the incremental development of imagery in interaction, has received relatively little attention in interaction analytic research.

A number of lines of inquiry have started to address this paucity of research on body visual conduct over longer stretches of discourse. Enfield (2004), for example, has demonstrated how information represented by a gesture can be carried forward from a previous to a subsequent utterance through the use of a gesture hold. Other studies have looked at gestures being reproduced across different speakers' turns at talk. Lerner (2002) addressed instances of choral production of gesture, gesture-matching. In instructional settings, Koschmann and LeBaron (2002) and Arnold (2012) have shown how repeating gestures embedded in an instruction is one way for learner participants to display understanding (see also de Fornel, 1992 on return gestures).

Elsewhere, using data from monologic narrative retellings within experimental settings (e.g. McNeill & Levy, 1973; McNeill, 2000) and elicited narration tasks (Kataoka, 2009; 2010), researchers have explored the role of gestural "catchments" in developing thematic cohesion, affording "a thread of consistent visuo-spatial imagery running though a discourse segment that provides a gesture-based window into discourse cohesion" (McNeill, on catchments, 2000, p316; see also Kendon, 1972; Laursen, 2005). These examples have not, on the whole, focused on gestural conduct produced in relation to objects in the immediate surround (but see Arnold, 2012; Kataoka, 2009).

The current chapter seeks to contribute to these lines of investigation by considering sequences in naturally occurring focused encounters where an initial orientation to an object in constructing a referent is re-occasioned at subsequent points. The material properties of these objects afford interactants stable visual resources to be able to bring into focus at relevant points. By tracking recurrent participant orientations to particular objects made relevant at various points in a section of discourse, we gain further understanding of the representational affordances (Gibson, 1979; Hutchby, 2001) of objects oriented to in interaction.

2. Data & Method

I present a number of examples drawn from a collection of such leitmotifs identified in video data of institutional activities carried out at a Danish university. The data consist of some 9 hours of video recordings of helpdesk service encounters at an international office and study guidance meetings, most of which were recorded using multiple cameras. In these settings, students approach support staff with some concern relating to their studies or stay, and the staff member is either able to assist with the issues personally, or alternatively will provide the student with information on where else they would be able to obtain the requested information or support. Advice sought after in these encounters varies in complexity from relatively straightforward (for example advice on registering for a residence permit), to highly complex, where various interconnecting agents and activities are mapped against a timeline that may stretch from the client's past (for example, previous education) and present to the possible future outcomes. The meetings can be categorised as high-stakes encounters, as they may concern people's livelihoods, their legal status, their well-being, and as such in these encounters it is important that mutual understanding is sufficiently
achieved, regardless of what language they are using. The data used for the current analyses involve participants using English as the medium of interaction. None of the participants here, however, has English as a first language.

Although the objects that commonly feature in the data – for example notepads, writing utensils, tables, computer monitors – constitute the utilitarian tools of these institutional activities, they appear to be drawn on in addition as visual resources for participants to develop meaning across larger stretches of interaction. In the analyses, we focus on how participants mobilise these objects on successive occasions in the service of meaning development, each time bringing them into mutual elaboration with verbal referents through embodied actions such as gesticulation, physical contact and gaze orientation.

The methodological approach adopted here corresponds with that found in other similar interaction analytic studies that draw on insights originating in the sociological work by, amongst others, Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman, Harvey Sacks, and Albert Scheflen (for example, Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Goodwin, 1981; Heath, 1986; Kendon, 1990; Streeck 1996; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000), broadly drawing on the micro-ethnographic traditions of conversation analysis and context analysis. This methodological approach allows an analysis to chart the concomitant deployment of verbal, visual, tactile and material resources, as participants in naturally occurring focused encounters develop a range of referents. The unit of analysis here is the vocal-with-visual-action composites which constitute such co-present interaction, and more pertinent to this study those which feature repeated orientations to material objects in the setting.

3. Introduction to the phenomenon

The images below are a selection culled from a thirteen-minute meeting between a study guidance counsellor and a student (this meeting also features in the third analysis below).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

Figure 1 Recurrent hand orientations to table section in counselling meeting

We note that the counsellor, Adam, keeps returning his hands to a particular section of the table surface in front of him\(^1\). The first time he does this is approximately one minute into the meeting, the final time he does is a minute from the end. In between, Adam returns one or both hands to the particular section of the table on a number of occasions. He places his hand(s) on this section of the table, he points to it, and produces various hand-shapes in this area. His hand or hands are positioned in the area for various periods of time, and this occurs as he pursues particular topic

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\(^1\) The counsellor here also uses various other objects and locations recurrently throughout the meeting, one of which we will look at in greater detail in the analytic section
development relating to the procedural framework relating to the student’s desire to become a high school teacher in Denmark by completing a Master’s degree. For example, he may refer to this particular location on the table as he speaks about the Danish Master’s programme (1m01), a Bachelor’s degree (1m07), high school certification (1m11), the high school subject of Danish literature (1m52), how many hours of a particular high school subject is required (1m56), additional educational requirements (4m32) teacher training (7m12), qualifications (8m44), and knowledge requirements (11m40).

The question that presents itself is what, if anything, this recurrent orientation to this section of the table brings to the ongoing business at hand, which is here a discussion of possible trajectories available to the student. If the referents expressed in speech on these occasions are so widely different as those listed above, what linking element does the visual motif afford the interaction, and how is this structurally woven into the discourse?

In what follows, we will look at three sequences. We will follow an extended set of recurrent body visual motifs from the same meeting discussed above and a shorter sequence where two participants develop the visual motif in partnership. First, however, we will consider single recurrences of an orientation to a location on a table area, much in the same way it is used in the example above. In this example, Milly, a member of staff at a help desk, reaches out and touches a particular location on the counter surface on two occasions (Figures 2 and 4). Transcription conventions are based on those developed by Gail Jefferson (e.g., 2004). The transcript is complemented with frame grabs, which are tagged in the transcription with # (see also, Mondada, 2008).

(1) LTSH-day3-SE-1038

16 MIL:→ you have of course (.) a free (0.4) #study place. (.)
Figure #2
17 → at that #university? (.)
Figure #2
18 but #next to that you c-
Figure #3
19 → #you m- might have a scholarship,
Figure #4
20 a #Nordplus (. ) scholarship,
Figure #5

Here, Milly initially touches the right hand location on the counter at the same time as producing a verbal reference to a university the student is applying to visit. She brings her fingers down on the counter here on both study place and university (Figure 2). Subsequently, when the staff member refers to the scholarship, she returns her hand to the exact location (Figure 4) on the desk. In what follows, we will consider how this location on the desk is used and developed in these two moments of contact. First, however, we should take a closer look at the sequence in which this is embedded, and how the topic of the scholarship is introduced.

4.1 Analysis: Sequence 1 – single, local recurrences

In the current sequence, Che, a fulltime international student from an Asian country,
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has just submitted an application form pertaining to a Nordic study-exchange programme, Nordlys, and then asks when he might hear from the university about outcome of the application. As the participants attend to the timing of the decision regarding his application in lines 01-11, the topic of scholarship funding is raised and subsequently developed.

Scholarships are different things to different people at different stages of their procedural life. A scholarship may be a pot of financial support to allow for somebody to do something, but it is also something that is applied for, generated and awarded. Indeed in this sequence, scholarships are applied for by students and by institutions; they are granted by funding bodies and by institutions; scholarship funding is allocated to and shared between applicants; they provide financial support to undertake certain activities; and they are named. How the scholarship's different stages, agents, sources, trajectories and understandings are demarcated from one another is a matter to which participants need to attend in the somewhat complex unpacking of the related procedural framework. In the following sequence, we note how the counsellor mobilises the structural properties of the counter area in the service of this differentiation.

(2) LTSH-day3-SE-1038

01 MIL: I think in four weeks or so
02 you will will have an answer for from #us.
Figure #7
03 CHE: [i:n] in
04 MIL: [but]
05 MIL: in #four weeks.
Figure #8
06 CHE: in four [weeks]
07 MIL: [but] (0.3)
08 MIL: er we also apply #(.) for: #scholar#ships. so
Figure #9 #10 #11
09 [we] we might not know? (0.5) in four weeks
10 CHE: [hm]
11 MIL: how many money we have for scholarships.
12 (0.5)
13 MIL: er:::m.
14 CHE: do you mean that I can have a scholarship.
15 MIL: yeah #er next to: #(0.3)
Figure #12 #13
16 → #you have of course (. ) a #free (0.4) study place. (. )
Figure #14 #15/16
17 → at that university? (. )
18 but #next to that you c-
Figure #17
19 → #you m- might have a scholarship,
Figure #18
20 a #Wordplus (. ) scholarship.
Figure #19
21 (0.5)
22 CHE: okay.
23 MIL: [we don't know] the amount yet.
24 CHE: [that's cool ]
4.1.1 Procuring the scholarship

Immediately prior to this sequence, Che has asked about when he might be informed of the outcome of his Nordlys application. Milly informs him that it will take about four weeks (lines 01-02). As she produces from us in line 02, Milly lifts her right hand from a rest position (Kendon, 1980\textsuperscript{2}) at the side of the application document (on from) and brings the tips of her fingers down onto the counter (on us; Figure 7), placed approximately one third of the way across from her position. The hand is kept in this location throughout lines 03-08, with Milly tapping the same location on the counter on four weeks (line 05)\textsuperscript{3}, but (line 07) and apply (line 08), lending further visual emphasis to the words stressed vocally in her turn\textsuperscript{4} (Figure 8). She then lifts her hand momentarily (Figure 09), reaches forward (Figure 10) and draws it back again (Figure 11) in what resembles a pulling motion on scholarships, with the hand again coming to stand on the counter on scholarships. Coupled with the word scholarships, Milly’s hand movement appears to demonstrate visually that the scholarship in this formulation is something that needs to be procured from an external source, rather than provided by the ‘us’ that she has earlier located in the more proximal position on the counter (in line 02, Figure 07). Furthermore, this location having been semantically charged with us previously, the trajectory of the scholarship is indexed as inbound at this stage, in line with the pulling gesture, as opposed to, for example, directed from the funding source directly to the student-applicant.

4.1.2 Allocating the scholarship

When Milly subsequently presents an account for perhaps not being able to provide Che with information on the available scholarships (lines 09-11 we might not know (0.5) in four weeks how many money we have for scholarships), she produces three open handed gestures, two mid-turn and one in turn final position. As Milly says we

\textsuperscript{2} Rest position has been discussed elsewhere by Sacks and Schegloff (2002 (1973)) as ‘home position’. Jürgen Streeck (personal communication) cautions against the use of this term, arguing: “Hands have not one home position, but only temporary rest positions relative to the physical setting, including body posture, and activity within which their owner finds herself. Moreover, "home" insinuates that the hands "normally" return to the position from which they departed for the gesture or act, for which there is no evidence.”

\textsuperscript{3} Bold-faced font is used to indicate the syllable with which is produced in synchrony with the gesture stroke. In this case, the point in which the hand is brought into contact with the object.

\textsuperscript{4} The tapping of the counter is further matched in line 05 (four weeks) and 08 (apply) with head nods.
might not know (line 05), she briefly brings her hands together in front her and moves them apart laterally (on not know). She subsequently produces two two-handed offering gestures (see Streeck, 2009b), one on how many money and a turn-final offering gesture on have for scholarships (Streeck, 2009b). Here, we see that the trajectory marking the earlier procedural stage has changed direction, with the scholarship now directed away from the institutional representative and toward the student-applicant. We note, in how he subsequently responds, that this is also Che's understanding. He leans forward and produces a candidate understanding check, paraphrasing her prior turn to check whether she means that he may be in line to be offered a scholarship (line 14). Milly produces a confirmation, and builds on to this an extended formulation which fleshes out the procedural framework within which his application is constituted. It is here that we find the two embodied actions introduced earlier.

4.1.3 Using the scholarship

In line 15, as Milly says yeah, she brings her hands into the space immediately above the application form lying on the counter in front of her (Figure 12), while at the same moment diverting her gaze from Che's face to the location of her hands. Streeck (1993) has described how a speaker's looking at their gesturing hands can act to mark the relevance of the hand gestures. Che’s gaze follows that of Milly to look down at the hands and their framing position over the application form. Milly brings the fingertips of both hands down onto the document on next to, looks back up to Che, and subsequently lifts her right hand up to the previous position above the document, and follows this with a number of relatively dynamic moves. She touches the document lightly on of course (Figure 13), then moves the hand much higher, a move that is tracked by Che, as he reorients his gaze up and on to Milly's face (Figure 14). At this point, Milly then moves the hand quickly back to the document on a free, before producing a dynamic arc from there to a location halfway across the counter and to the side of the application, touching down on study place (Figure 15). As she does so, she tilts her head to the right, which acts to highlight the hand movement in the same direction (see McClave, 1999).

The gaze orientation of the participants may account for the increased dynamic of the embodied actions at this point. Gullberg and Holmqvist (2002) suggest that "[a]s long as gestures are moving, peripheral vision is sufficient for detecting (and processing) the broader gestural information (location, direction, or size) even when gestures are performed in the periphery" (2002: 212). With mutual gaze established, Che will then still be able to make out the movements of Milly's hands as she positions them in different locations around the counter. Indeed, as she extends her formulation of a free study place with at that university, she momentarily lifts her hand and brings it down again in the same spot, keeping the hand mobile in this location (Figure 16). As she does so, she matches the hand with a head lift and nod, which is in turn matched by Che.

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5 Gullberg and Holmqvist’s (2002) findings suggest that it is holds, cessations of movement in hand gesture, that peripheral vision has difficulties detecting. This accounts for recipients orienting gaze to holds to a far greater degree than to moving hands (which peripheral vision is better able to detect).
As Milly restarts the formulation she embarked upon earlier in line 15, she retracts her hand to a more proximal position, tapping the counter to the side of the document twice, as she says but next to that (Figure 17). She then reaches back over to the precise location where she touched the counter earlier as she mentioned study place at that university (lines 16 & 17), and brings her hand down onto the counter again at the start of you might have a scholarship, keeping it there for the duration (Figure 18), with Che producing a head nod at the moment Milly makes contact with the surface.

By recycling the location on the counter initially established as representing a study place at a foreign university, Milly’s current formulation can build on the previously occasioned reference. The scholarship (line 19) here relates to financial support for undertaking the study visit, rather than the external funding applied for by the home university (4.1.1), or a pot of funding available to share out by the home university (4.1.2). In this way, the particular location on the counter surface is occasioned as a visual, physical leitmotif that can be recycled subsequently as a resource for individuating a particular referent within a shared indexical field (Hanks, 1992).

4.1.4 Closing the circle

To complete the description of the procedures relating to the scholarship, Milly finally returns to the source of the scholarship, providing its name this time, a Nordplus (. ) scholarship (line 20). She retracts her hand and tapping the document twice, both on Nordplus and scholarship (Figure 19). As she says scholarship here, Che nods his head three times in acknowledgment, and says okay that’s cool (lines 22 & 24). We note then that by tapping the document while speaking of a Nordplus scholarship, Milly is able to skilfully index the source of the funding this time around, the Nordplus network, of which Nordlys (to which the application is related) is a sub-programme.

In formulating the procedural framework in this way, Milly, the staff member, has been able to disambiguate the different possible understandings of ‘scholarship’, and furthermore, is able to do this without needing to encode the range of different
readings solely in the linguistic channel (for this, see also Goodwin, 2000; 2006). The analysis indicates that these embodied actions allow for particular locations on physical objects to be charged with a particular reference through being brought into relation with other sign systems, here speech. This location, a reference point constituted upon a temporally stable, concrete material object in the immediate visuo-spatial and haptic field, may then act as a *metonymic* resource for later recycling through a repeated orientation to the location. As in Enfield’s (2004) study, reference is carried forward visually from a previously constructed utterance. Here, however, it is done through a re-occasioning of an orientation to an object, rather than a gesture *hold*.

Gesture has been argued to be primarily a speaker phenomenon (McNeill, 1992; Schegloff, 1984), and we see this distribution in the sequence discussed. Koschmann and LeBaron (2002), however, have cautioned against neglecting the way gestural performance is *recipient designed* (see also Streeck, 1994; Nevile, 2007), and argue for the importance of finding evidence in respondent responses for the consequentiality of gesture in developing subsequent understanding (p270). The following example shows how particular gestural orientations to the same help desk counter surface are taken up and further developed by two parties to an encounter.

### 4.2 Sequence 2 - A collaboratively occasioned visual leitmotif

Although in the previous example the counter surface is mobilised only by the staff member as one resource to structure reference in the unfolding talk, it is not always a resource confined to a single interlocutor. In the following example, we will see how the structure of the same object, a help desk counter, is used initially by one participant, yet how the coupling of object and spoken referent is subsequently taken up by an interlocutor and further developed. As in the previous episode, the current sequence involves a student-client and a member of the help desk staff discussing an aspect of the procedural framework involved in applying for a position on a study exchange programme, namely the timeframe. The encounter here involves two Danish students, Erik and Tom, and a member of staff, Li, originally from an East Asian country.

(4) LTSH-day4-SE-1222

01 ERI: but I'm on I'm on my #second semester #right now
  Figure #21 #22
02 ERI: (0.4)
03 ERI: do #I have to apply (0.3)
  Figure #23
04 before the fifteenth if I w- want to go at any (0.4)
05 #point (0.2) of my
  Figure #24
06 can I can I #apply #next year perhaps
  Figure #25 #26
07 (1.4)
08 ERI: must it be this year
09 (0.5)
10 LI: erm next year I think then you you apply #next year
  Figure #27
11 (0.9)
12 ERI: I apply #next year?
  Figure #28
4.2.1 Initial mapping of the timeframe

In lines 01-08, Erik requests information pertaining to the timing of submitting an application for a study exchange trip. Contained in the request are a number of references to time: my second semester now (line 01), before the fifteenth (line 04), at any point (line 04-05), next year (line 06) and this year (08). In the production of the question, Erik uses the counter as one resource to demarcate between the different time frames. As he initiates the turn in line 01, Erik establishes eye contact with Li, removes his elbow from the counter and produces with his index finger a circling gesture upon the counter surface (Figure 21). The gesture coincides with my second semester, and marks out an area of the counter in front of him. Immediately following this, in conjunction with right now, he taps the desk twice with his stretched index finger, roughly in the centre of the circle he had previously marked out (Figure 22). An initial observation is then that an expanse of time (a semester) is represented here visually by an expanse of space, and a point in time (right now) by a spot in the visual field. Further evidence for this is found in how Erik further constructs his turn.

As Erik says do I have to apply (line 03), he taps the desk five times in the same place as above. The first tap is again produced with the index finger, with the remainder of the taps performed with his extended middle finger (Figure 23). He appears then to index (rightly too) this counter as the place where this activity, applying to participate in a study exchange programme, is conducted. He then raises the pointing finger above the counter on before the and brings it down on the surface
again on fifteenth and keeps it standing there for the duration of if I w-want to go. Erik then prepares the next gesture on any, retracting the finger from the counter and bringing both hands together in front of him. He then opens up his arms during the 0.4 second silence, spreading his hands along the side of the counter so that they both come to rest either side of him on the side of the counter surface, with palms facing inwards (Figure 24). The hands are subsequently kept there for the rest of the interrupted turn point (0.2) of my. We see again that points in time (the fifteenth) are marked visually with a single point in the visual field, with stretches of time (any point in my) given visual representation through a marking out of a larger area, here utilizing the structural properties of the long side of the counter surface.

When stretches of time are represented visually in the current data, they have the tendency to be organised along a horizontal line in front of the body, with the present placed in front of the person producing the gesture, and then past and future placed either side. At this point, Erik has spread his hands laterally along the counter, but has not indicated a particular direction as referring to the past or future. This he does, however, in what follows. The hands are kept in position as he restarts the question can I can I (line 06), but he then retracts his left hand along the counter, producing a finger point to the central area of the counter on apply (Figure 25). We may note that he has previously pointed to this area as he spoke of applying at the outset of this turn (line 03) and that this point echoes this earlier gesture. More importantly though, he then returns his hand to the left side of the counter on next year perhaps, although now producing a pointing gesture with his index finger placed on the counter (Figure 26). We may assume then that the left region of the counter surface is used here to represent future time. What, however, does his interlocutor make of this?

4.2.2 Uptake and development of the timeframe motif

For most of Erik’s turn (lines 01-06), Li has had his gaze oriented at the information sheet, which he and the two students had been discussing immediately prior to this sequence. In line 03, he disengages eye contact from Erik, directing it to the sheet of paper, and gradually rotating it until it faces in his direction for reading. With his gaze down at the document, Erik’s gesticulation is still firmly within his peripheral vision, with Erik’s primary gesturing left hand active very much in the vicinity of the document. There is no explicit orientation to the gestures produced here. However, when speakership changes, we see Li adopt the same positioning upon the counter that we previously witnessed from Erik.

(5) LTSH-day4-SE-1222
10 LI: erm next year I think then you you apply #next year Figure 27
11 (0.9)
12 ERI: I apply #next year? Figure 28
13 LI: yeah [if you er] #you want to go like er
14 ERI: [yes ] Figure 20
15 (0.4)
16 LI: two thousand ten the autumn (0.2)
17 then you apply #(0.4) Figure 29
18 before the february fifteenth this year

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6 The tendency is furthermore for the future to be placed to the right, with past on the left.
Erik’s question is first completed at the end of line 06 (see Excerpt (4)), *can I can I apply next year perhaps*. What follows is a relatively lengthy pause, during which Li looks up and away from where the two students are standing. This looking away has been described elsewhere as displaying an information retrieval episode, such as in searching for a word (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986). Erik responds to this by reformulating the question as *must it be this year* (line 08). As he does so, Li turns back to the counter to face the students and says *erm next year I think then you you apply next year* (line 10). As he produces the first *next year*, he brings his right hand from its rest position on the counter and places it to his right, at the opposite side of the counter to where Erik’s hand rests (Figure 27). He follows this with a circling wrist rotation of the hand and places the hand again, although with open palm this time, at the same location along the counter on the second *next year* (Figure 28). Erik and Li’s hands are now positioned parallel in relation to one another across the counter, although this does not necessarily indicate that Li has adopted Erik’s gestural motif of using the structure of the counter to mark a timeline. We find more evidence for this, however, in how Li expands on his formulation.

Li brings his hand down in the same location on a number of further occasions in what follows (*you want to go line 13; two thousand and ten line 16 and the autumn line 16*). At the same time he reorients his gaze to the gesturing hand, which in turn occasions Erik and Tom to look down at the gesture also (see Figure 20 above). Li and Erik subsequently re-establish mutual gaze as Li repositions his finger in the location above the desk in front of him and says *then you apply* (line 17), pointing down at the surface in the 0.4 second pause that follows (Figure 29). He then brings the pointing index finger down onto the surface as he produces *before the February fifteenth this year*, with taps occasioned on *before, February fifteenth, this year*. Erik produces a confirmation request in the next turn, *this year* (line 18) matching Li’s
pointing gesture with is a parallel location across the counter (Figure 30), where he had earlier placed the right now (line 01) and before the fifteenth (line 04). Again, both gestures are aligned across the counter, and in addition, we see that Li has fully adopted Erik’s schematic representation of the timeline under discussion.

Finally, Li moves his hand back to his right as he expands further with then if it’s next year (line 20). Interestingly, here he does not place his hand at the counter, but keeps it suspended in the space a little behind the counter during the 0.3 second silence and the extension autumn (line 23; Figure 31). Erik produces a change-of state token (Heritage, 1984) ah (line 22), with his left hand again following Li’s so it is in a parallel position, albeit resting on the desk. Li then moves his own hand to the counter as he says then you apply (line 23), keeping it there for next year (line 26; Figure 32).

Although Li’s formulation here has mentioned next year twice, by separating the gesture locations for 1. the desired study abroad period (next year) and 2. the timeframe for submitting an application (next year), he provides further visual differentiation between the two, where the help desk counter serves as a reference for the activity of submitting an application (a motif we saw Erik establish earlier in lines 03, 06 and 12). Erik subsequently rounds off this sequence by reformulating Li’s prior turn as a confirmation check in lines 25 and 27. Again, the future time frame is marked with the same patterning observed earlier, with the open left hand being brought into contact with the counter to his left on two thousand eleven, the hand returning to the central area on I apply and extended again to left position on next year. As Li produces the final confirming yeah (line 29), Erik folds his hand and acknowledges Li’s confirmation with okay. He then removes his hand from the counter as the second student initiates a question.

We see in this example how the structural properties of the help desk counter surface are used collaboratively by the participants as a resource to mark out different temporal elements of the procedural framework relating to the application process for a future study exchange position. Once a particular motif is introduced by one of the interlocutors, it is taken up by the other.

Although this pattern has been described elsewhere for instructional settings (e.g., Koschmann & LeBaron, 2002; Arnold, 2012), here the recycling of prior gestural production is not occasioned as a display of understanding of a prior embodied instruction. Here, the participants build on the embodied work performed upon the counter, recycling the locations and the shapes produced with the structural properties of the object as resources with which further referents are developed. The student uses the help desk counter as a symbolic representation of various timeframes pertaining to the activity of submitting an application to undertake a study exchange. The member of staff subsequently adopts this schematic representation, but also further develops it, for example in differentiating between a future timeframes for the application procedure and for the study exchange period.

A final point worth noting is that this collaborative work is done without any explicit gaze orientation on the part of the participants being directed at one another’s hand movements. Each produces instances of visual conduct that resemble those produced previously by their co-participants, even though these were only available within the field of general or peripheral vision in relation to the gaze fixation points.\footnote{Ciolek and Kendon (1980, following Hall (1963; 1964 and Webb, 1964)) differentiate between peripheral vision, which encompasses a 180 degree range, general vision (60
In these two examples, we have looked at relatively short sequences where we see recurrent orientations to structures at hand. We will turn now to a longer section of interaction to demonstrate how these leitmotifs feature beyond single discourse units such as proposition sequences. We focus here on a different object than has been discussed up to this point, namely a doorway connecting one room with another.

4.3 Visual leitmotifs developed over larger sequences

The final example presented here concerns a 13-minute study guidance counselling meeting. Here, Tina, a client from an East Asian country, is inquiring about the possibilities of taking a Master’s degree, with a view to becoming a high school teacher in Denmark. A number of visual motifs feature in the encounter. The one we focus on here first features some five minutes into the meeting, when they are discussing possible subject combinations, and where the counsellor, Adam, produces a number of pointing gestures to one particular door in the room.

The doorway in question connects the room where the participants are engaged in the counselling meeting with an adjacent office used by the counsellors for other administrative duties. The door is closed, and as such there is no visual access to the office next-door. Two other doorways lead into the room, one connecting an office unconnected with the counselling staff, and one leading to the general reception area. Clients may be brought into the designated room for counselling meetings either directly from the reception area, or through the counsellors’ office. All doors are kept closed during the meetings.

At the point where we enter the meeting here, the participants are addressing which subjects can be combined in a Master’s programme.

(6) LTSH-meeting17; 5:24-5:29

01 ADA: um you will have to make a choice (0.3)
02 between some already fixed (0.2)
03 combinations [of] #subjects
04 TIN: [okay] Figure #33
05 (0.4)
06 ADA: which you can find on the #internet Figure #34
07 and I can show you #where you can find them

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degrees), clear vision (12 degrees) and detailed vision (1 degree). Of course, we can never know for sure what is actually seen by someone, regardless of where her gaze is fixated.

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8 I use door and doorway interchangeably here, and both in the sense of the physical structure that acts as a portal from one space to another. In the case at hand the door is closed, but the participants would be free to move to the other room, which constitutes an alternative workspace for the counsellor, if they so chose to.
In line 03, Adam, the study guidance counsellor, produces a deictic gesture to the notepad lying on the table in front of him as he mentions Tina's possible subjects (line 03, Figure 33), then brings his right hand up to shoulder height and produces a pointing gesture in the direction of the door situated to his left as he refers to the internet (line 06, Figure 34). As he does so, he also tilts his head in the same direction, which, similar to earlier example (Excerpt 1, Figure 15), acts to highlight the direction of the point (McClave, 1999). He retracts his hand to a rest position on the table (and I can show you), before motioning in the direction of the doorway on where you can find (line 07, Figure 35) and to the notepad again on them (line 07).

We are interested here in his use of the doorway to refer to the internet (line 06). In the room designated for the counselling meetings, there is no computer present and neither participant has a laptop at hand. There are, however, a number of desktop computers in an adjacent office, one of which is sometimes used for assisting student-clients with accessing online information. The doorway to Adam's left is the one that leads to this office and as such, the closed door appears to be used here to refer to the adjoining office space where a computer is available.

Although the availability of the computer in the adjacent space is known to Adam, it is less likely that Tina, the client, is aware of this resource. Goodwin, in his research on interactions with his father, a man with severe aphasia, has described how the parties to the interactions were able to draw on common ground understandings of the lived world (Clark, 1996), in particular geographic and social space, to make sense of his father's pointing gestures (Goodwin, 2003c; 2006). In the current example, such common ground is somewhat limited, as counsellor and client have asymmetrical epistemic access to the structural properties that make up the "transposed space" (Goodwin, 2006:114) of the office next-door, and neither have visual access to the space. Nonetheless, Tina may be in the position to draw on common ground understandings of institutional activities (Kidwell, 2000) in order to make sense of Adam's composite utterance (Enfield, Kita & de Ruiter, 2007). Furthermore, as she entered through the office, she may have noted the layout and the resources present in the environment. Neither Adam, however, nor we as analysts, are in the position to know exactly what knowledge is triggered by Adam as he points to the door that leads to the office space in the adjoining room. What is evident, however, is that the pointing gesture to the doorway is introduced in conjunction with talk pertaining to the Internet.

By pointing to the door as he introduces the topic of online resources (which you can find on the internet) he associates the object of the door or doorway with online activity. As in the previous examples, the doorway is now a resource for referring back to on later occasions to index the online world. He immediately makes use of this in the remainder of his turn, where the activity of I can show you where is indexed as referring to an Internet search through his accompanying deictic gesture to
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the door. A short while later, Adam uses the same structure again in the production of a subsequent turn (see below). Here, however, there is no mention of the Internet (or anything referring to online activity) prior to where it is produced, as was the case in the example above.

(7) 5m58-6m12

01 ADA:  that would be uh (0.5) that might be an option
02     I’m not sure
03 [we would] #have to check it
  Figure #36
04 TIN:  [ hmm ]
05 ADA:  but co- communication is offered in english
06 so english and communication might be an option
07 TIN:  i i checked it
08 ADA:  you [#checked it]
         Figure#37
09 TIN:  [ it’s ] like combination=
10 ADA: =okay [ so ] if if you #checked it then it is an option
         Figure #38
11 TIN:  [yeah]

In line 03, Adam suggests they check up on a query from her (relating to subjects she would need to take a particular Master’s degree). Although he does not include verbally where this check would take place, he raises his right hand from a rest position at the table, and motions to the door as he explains we would have to check it (Figure 36), retracting the hand again subsequently. After Tina suggests that she had already checked up on this (line 08), Adam raises the same hand again to produce a finger point at the door as he issues a confirmation check you checked it (line 08, Figure 37), and again on if if you checked it (Figure 38). Although Tina does produce a hand gesture in line 09 as she reports her findings (it’s like combination), a pointing gesture that switches back and forth to the door and away, it provides only weak evidence that Tina actually displays any kind of uptake of Adam’s use of the doorway to refer to online resources. Stronger evidence can be found sometime later, however. At the seven and a half minute mark, both Adam and Tina produce explicit pointing gestures to the door.

(8) 7:33-7:57

01 ADA:  the thing is uhm (0.9) one thing is as I s-said before
02     that you have to have (0.6) your (0.7) uhm (0.3)
03 your (0.6) B.A. papers #estimated
         Figure #39
04 TIN:  hm[m]
05 ADA:  [bly this institution (0.4) I [think it’s]
06 TIN:  [ Ciri- ]us
Here in lines 01-05, Adam displays some difficulties retrieving the new name for The Danish Agency for International Education, an agency formerly named *CIRIUS*. The way this is brought off has the hallmarks of a collaborative word search, marked with hesitations, intra-turn pauses and gaze aversion (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986). Here, however, Adam also raises his pen-holding right hand up to shoulder height and produces a pointing gesture to the door, while tracking his gaze in the direction of the point, and keeping it in this position for the remainder of the turns in lines 05-08 (Figure 39). Following the 0.4 pause in line 05, Tina offers the former name of the agency, *Cirius*, as a candidate for the institution to which he is attempting to put a name. Adam responds with a qualified acceptance of her suggestion, upon which Tina rotates her hand and produces a palm-up pointing gesture to the doorway as she says in lines 9 and 10, *yeah they have a new name* *I guess they change they website* (see Figure 40). The agency is associated here with its online presence, and Tina is able to use Adam’s referring back, and, in addition, his fishing in the direction of the doorway to discern to which of the earlier mentioned institutions he is referring. Tina’s gesturing is subsequently matched in turn by Adam pointing a number of times to the door with his pen.

Tina subsequently retracts her hand to a rest position on her lap beneath the table, but brings the hand out again to produce a second pointing gesture to the doorway as she says *I bookmarked the website* (line 14, Figure 41). Adam in turn raises his left hand in the same direction and produces a holding gesture at shoulder height as he responds with *yeah I have bookmarked it as Cirius too* (line 14, Figure 42). This gesture may refer to the conventional place for locating webpage bookmarks in browser programmes such as Internet Explorer and Chrome, i.e. the top of the browser window. Interestingly, however, the browser window here is represented visually in the direction of the door.

In the remainder of the 13-minute encounter, Adam and Tina refer to the Internet and to *CIRIUS* a handful more times, the final time being just seconds from the closing of the meeting. Again, we see similar embodied displays being used on these occasions. It appears then that once the particular visual leitmotif has been established, that is
can be recycled even beyond the shorter sequences within which it was initially established (discussed in the first two examples above). One each occasion, the object may develop its particular affordances for symbolic representation in an accumulative fashion, with the semantic load (Koschmann & LeBaron, 2002) increasing incrementally. Where a doorway is singled out as representing access to the Internet, it may be invoked later in the unfolding talk to index online resources or activities. Subsequently, if used to index the online presence of a particular agent within the procedural framework being discussed, the object can come to be used as a reference point to said agent (or agency, as in this case), or a resource connected with this referent.

Once established, a leitmotif such as this one can then be used alongside other leitmotifs, each operating as a resource to differentiate between the various intersecting agents, timelines and activities involved in the procedural frameworks at the heart of these discussions. We note in fact that the current example is taken from the same encounter as the example depicted in Figure 1 in the introduction. Depicted were two out of a number of motifs that were interwoven into the fabric of the unfolding interaction.

5. Discussion

This chapter has described one particular meaning-making practice involved in the “interactive organization of knowledge” (Goodwin, 1996:399) in co-present interaction. This involves what I have described as the development of leitmotifs through recurrent orientational displays to particular objects in the visuo-spatial and tactual surround. The analyses demonstrate how participants are able to perform an initial mobilization of representational affordances (Gibson, 1979; Hutchby, 2001) of objects in the setting, and then subsequently draw on the resulting semantic correspondences in developing reference over larger stretches of discourse. A particular reference generated by these aggregating actions, which include objects, speech, gesture and vocal conduct being brought into mutual elaboration with one another, is then drawn on and developed in an incremental fashion as a composite leitmotif in later symbolic representation.

In the cases discussed here, participants were able to fluidly skip-connect (Local, 2004; Laursen, 2005) back to earlier points of reference in the encounters, while formulating aspects of relatively complex procedural frameworks which include a host of interconnecting referents. The data show participants drawing on whatever materials are at hand in order to accomplish this, including those material objects found in the immediate surround. In the cases presented here, and concerned with encounters between students and administrative staff at a university, members draw on help desk counter- and table-top surfaces, documents, and an adjacent doorway, as resources for the symbolic representation of particular thematic elements topicalised and developed in the meetings. Observing co-participants assembling for one another such components of meaning-making into hybrid and dynamic aggregates of semiotic resources provides us not only with insight into the rich tapestry that constitutes co-present interaction, but also the moment-by-moment interpretive faculties participants-in-interaction deem propitious.

Koschmann and LeBaron (2002) have argued that the meaning of a gesture is contingent on its relationship to “its preceding (and succeeding) forms of visible and
vocal interaction” (2002:263). By remaining sensitive to the use of objects as temporally stable - yet semantically accumulative - visual resources for symbolic representation, this study takes up Streeck's (2009b) argument that embodied conduct builds on sequences of prior imagery. This is an under-represented area in interaction analytic research, where the general focus has been on utterance constructs in their local sequential context, rather than how they are constituted as themes within patterns which extend beyond the traditionally more narrow sequential environment surrounding turns-at-talk. This opening of the research aperture to attend to larger stretches of interaction should not, of course, take the place of detailed microanalytic scrutiny. Rather it may complement it by enriching our understanding of the types of resources members draw on their interactions. Goodwin (2006) has suggested that “attempting to specify an analytic frame that does not exclude crucial components of the phenomenon being examined might enable us to ask more sensible questions.” (2006:120). By continuing to extend the focus of interaction analytic research to include the indexing and development of objects orientated to by co-participants in interaction over larger stretches of time, a fuller understanding can be achieved of how these complex patterns of reference are occasioned, maintained and developed. In line with this, the current study has explored how the representational affordances of the objects brought into mutual elaboration with other sign systems may gain in complexity on each occasion, accruing semantic material incrementally across stretches of discourse.

In the world of opera, Giacomo Puccini called this type of patterning thematic reminiscence, a leitmotif technique where prior semiotic material - a musical phrase, a colour, a prop - was recycled at later points in a work to allow for greater narrative complexity as a story unfolded. It would be speculative to consider that this technique has roots in less dramatic orders of social organization. However, as the study presented here shows, there appears to be evidence of a similar technique being used in activities much closer to home: in the mundane, everyday interactions in which we ourselves are involved.

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