

Organizing the 'we' in interaction

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The emotions are “collective” if actors have common feelings and these are perceived or defined by them as such. (Edward J. Lawler, Shane R. Thye, Jeongkoo Yoon 2014, s. 189.)

Abstract

In this paper, I analyse a piece of interaction during which the participants seem to have trouble arriving at an agreement in a series of affective evaluations. The sequence does not contain other initiations of repair, third position repairs or fourth position repairs, places in which problems of intersubjectivity become visible in the conversation analytic tradition. I show that these problems are due to the fact that the participants do not share an understanding of the nature of the conversation, their respective roles in it, or their mutual relationship. In the end, I discuss my analysis in light of the Schuetzian understanding of intersubjectivity and suggest that initiating and accomplishing repair are not the only means for restoring intersubjectivity in interaction.

Keywords

affective evaluation, assessment, reciprocity of perspectives, Schuetz

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1. Introduction

In conversation analysis, intersubjectivity is commonly understood to be based on the sequentiality of interaction: every turn reveals an interpretation of the previous turn, and unless this interpretation is challenged in the following turn, it is taken as shared (e.g., Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, Schegloff 1992, Sidnell 2014). It has been proposed that turn-organization, sequence organization, and repair organization provide an infrastructure (architecture) for intersubjectivity as interaction unfolds in an enchronic time scale (Sidnell 2014).

In this section, I analyse a sequence of interaction which has no explicit initiations of repair nor explicit displays of disagreement. Nevertheless, the participants have clear difficulties in arriving at a mutual stance towards recent happenings in their lives. I suggest that this is because they do not share an understanding of their mutual relationship. This leads to a momentary failure in their reciprocity of the perspectives (see Schuetz 1953). Consequently, I propose that a sufficiently shared understanding of the participants' relations to each other for all practical purposes is a crucial element for intersubjective understanding and joint social action.

The piece of interaction I analyse is an assessment sequence. Assessments are among the central means of proposing an affective-evaluative stance towards some aspect of the life-world to be shared (Pomerantz 1984, Goodwin & Goodwin 1987). As such, they are also one of the central interactional loci for the participants to organize their relationship with each other and with the world. They provide a test for their common-sense idealizations of the interchangeability of the standpoints and the congruency of the system of relevances (Schuetz 1953) in practice; in other words, for the foundations of intersubjectivity in interaction.

I first provide a detailed analysis of the extract as a whole. I then discuss how the relationship between the participants with respect to each other and the world evolves as the conversation unfolds. In the last section, I discuss the established conversation analytic understanding of intersubjectivity (Schegloff 1992, Sidnell 2014) and the broader, Schuetzian (1953) understanding of intersubjectivity in light of my analysis.

2. The analysis

The sequence I analyse comes from a telephone call between Ella and Arja. Ella is the wife of Pasi, who is the vicar of the local congregation, and Arja is a member of the congregation. Pasi has been on holiday from his church duties. During this holiday, Ella and Pasi's son was married. Earlier in the

day on which this telephone call takes place, Pasi had held his first church service after his holiday.

Ella has now called Arja to ask her to help serve coffee at an upcoming musical event at the church. After Arja has agreed to come, and the two women have talked about the practical matters of the event, Ella (in line 1) produces a demonstrative adjective *semmostii* (roughly ‘these kinds of things’) that wraps up the call. It can be classed as a possible pre-closing of the conversation because it expresses that Ella has nothing more to add, and provides a place for Arja to introduce any previously unmentioned mentionables (Schegloff & Sacks 1973). Arja exploits this opportunity (in lines 2–4) by congratulating Ella on becoming a mother-in-law. This opens up a fairly long stretch of talk on personal matters which sees an asymmetric relation between the participants with respect to the things they talk about. More importantly, the participants themselves do not recognize this asymmetry, which turns out to be problematic:

(1) ‘Onnee sulle’ ‘Congratulations’ [KTA: Sg 142_B03]

01 Ella: .hh j_{oo}:h. m.f_{fh}h ↑*se:mm::os*[*tii*.
PRT DEM1.ADJ-PL-PAR
yes. all right then.

[

02 Arja: [*nii*. ja o-
PRT PRT 1-

yes. and c-

03 sulle o:nnea *kuule kun sä olet*
you-ALL luck PRT PRT 2SG be-2SG
congratulations PRT for you are

04 anoppih.
a mother-in-law

05 *Ella:* *no* [↑]*kiitos kiitos.*
PRT thank you thank you
PRT thank you thank you

06 *Arja:* nii[:.
PRT

[
07 *Ella:* [no *nii, tässä on semmosta*
PRT PRT DEM1-INE/PRT be-3 DEM3.ADJ-PAR
well yes. such a fresh (thing)

08 *t::uoretta tapahtunu.=*
fresh-PAR happen-PPPC
has taken place

09 *Arja:* =*hnii mä ajattelin et[tä*
PRT 1SG think-PST-1SG PRT

- yes I thought that
- [
- 10 *Ella:* [[↑]mh,
- 11 (.)
- 12 *Arja:* *on se ihanaa kun on*
 be-3 DEM3 wonderful when be-3SG
 it is wonderful when there are
- 13 *tämmösiä* (.) <ilo:isia>
 DEM1.ADJ-PL-PAR happy-PL-PAR
 these kinds of happy
- 14 *ihania asioita et jo-* (.)
 wonderful-PL-PAR thing-PL-PAR PRT so-
 wonderful things that so-
- 15 *jotenkin niin .hhhh mä en tiedä,* (.)
 somehow so 1SG NEG-1SG know
 somehow so .hhhh I don't know
- 16 *tänään Ø tuntu kirkossa*
 today Ø feel.PST.1SG church-INE
 Ø felt awfully good at church today
- 17 <kauheen> mukavalt[ah,

awful-GEN nice

[

18 *Ella:* [mm.

19 *Arja:* =(kato) ku Pasi olih.
 PRT lnameM be-PST.3SG
 (you see) because Pasi was ((there))

20 (.)

21 *Ella:* oli juu. oikeen- (.)
 be-PST.3SG PRT very
 it was yes quite- (.)

22 oike[en (he) oli.
 very (DEM) be-PST.3
 quite (it) was.
 [

23 *Arja:* [voi h:yvä:nen aika sentään että::,
 INTERJ PRT
 oh good heavens

24 ihan niinku isä ois tullu
 quite PRT father be-CON.3 come-PPC
 ((it was)) like father had come

25 kotiih::.

home-ILL

home

26 Ella: *ai jaɸ(h)a[h hah hah haahɛ]*

PRT PRT

oh I see

[

27 Arja: *[ɸniih hih hih .hhhɛ]*

28 Ella: *.hh jo(h)oku mu(h)u sano*

someone else say-PST.3

someone else said

29 *muuten samalla lailla et*

by-the-way same-ADE way-ADE PRT

by the way the same so

30 Arja: *[ɪihan tottah.*

quite true-PAR

really

[

31 Ella: *[kyl kai se*

PRT probably DEM3.SG

indeed it probably

32 Ella: *.hh joooh:: .hhh et kyl kai se*

PRT

PRT PRT probably DEM3.SG

yes .hhh so indeed it probably

33 Ella: *jotenki- tai samanhenkisesti*
someho- or same-spirited
someho- or in the same spirit

34 *et kyl kai se jotenkin on*
PRT PRT probably DEM3.SG somehow be-3
so indeed it probably is

35 *näin että: että (.) tommonen jo (.)*
DEM1.MAN PRT PRT DEM2.ADJ already
so that: that (.) that kind of

36 *.hhh pitkään ollu vähä hhvanhempi kaveri*
long be-PPC bit older guy
slightly older guy (who's) already been (in the
congregation) for a long time

37 *niin on sitten- semmonenhh [.hh*
PRT be-3 then DEM3.ADJ
so (he) is then a kind of

38 Arja: *[nii.*
PRT
yes

39 *Ella*: *omalla tavallansa >semmonen< no*
own-ADE way-ADE-POSS DEM3.ADJ PRT
in his own way a kind of well

40 *Ella*: *seurakunnan isähän se on*
congregation-GEN father-CLI DEM3.SG be-3
the congregation's father he is

41 *sitte kui>tenki.<*
then anyway

Arja's turn in lines 2–4 begins with congratulations followed by an announcement of the reason for the congratulations. The congratulations convey an affective stance towards the reason for them, and the affective stance is supported by the stress and the lengthening of sounds in the word *o:nnea* 'congratulations'. The particle *kuule* 'listen' (line 3) in between these two TCUs places the focus on the reason for the congratulations, namely the fact that Ella has become a mother-in-law (*ku sä olet anoppi* 'for you are a mother-in-law') (see VISK § 858). The reason for the congratulations is a 'type 2 knowing' (Pomerantz 1980) for Arja. It is an

event in Ella's private life that Arja has apparently not witnessed herself.¹ Yet, she takes an affective evaluative stance towards it. Moreover, she formulates the reason for the congratulations on Ella becoming a mother-in-law instead of congratulating Ella for her son's marriage, thereby also categorizing Ella as a mother-in-law.

Arja's turn is not a typical 'my side telling' in that it is not produced as a situated report of an 'objective event' that Arja has experienced (see Pomerantz 1980). It has, however, a topic soliciting character in that it refers to an event in Ella's life that Arja has not witnessed herself (See also the discussion in the paragraph below). In doing so, it makes further elaboration of the event as relevant next action: how the wedding was, how Ella experienced the wedding or how she experiences her new role as a mother-in-law. Ella's response turn (line 5), a reduplicated "thank you" (*kiitos kiitos*), is not a straightforward aligning response, which is indexed already by the turn-initial particle *no* (Sorjonen & Vepsäläinen 2016). Although it acknowledges the congratulation by thanking, it does not align with the topic soliciting nature of Arja's turn, nor does it affiliate with the positive evaluation implied in the congratulation. The reduplication of "thank you" is a conventionalized manner to express the thanking as a

¹ We do not know for sure that she has not attended the wedding, but her congratulating Ella at this point indicates that she was not present at the wedding. I thank the editors for pointing this out.

routinized action that does not convey much affect (see VISK § 1738), and Ella does not proceed to evaluate or offer more details about the event.

Arja's response *nii* in line 6 reasserts the affective stance of Arja's own turn in lines 2–4, and in so doing insists on the topic by implying that Ella's response was insufficient or in some way inadequate (see Sorjonen 2001: 195-199). This is not, however, successful. Ella's next turn (lines 7–8) begins with the particle chain *no niin* which is used for signalling transition (Sorjonen & Vepsäläinen 2016; VISK § 859). She then continues by reformulating the reason for the congratulations as 'such a fresh (thing) has taken place' (*tässä on semmosta t::tuoretta tapahtunu*). The reformulation does not expand on the topic but refers to the wedding in a maximally vague way as *semmosta t::uoretta* 'such a fresh (thing)' where the demonstrative adjective *semmosta* marks the issue as known enough for the purposes at hand (see Etelämäki 2009). The description *tuoretta* 'fresh' refers to the timing of the wedding. Lacking any affective-evaluative stance, it merely confirms that something has taken place recently (see Pomerantz 1980: 196). In other words, Ella's turn functions as an aligning response to the congratulations, but it disaligns with the topic elicitation, and disaffiliates with the evaluative affective assessment implied in the congratulations.

In her next turn, Arja takes an explicitly evaluative affective stance towards the event in lines 9, 12–14, '...happy wonderful things...'. The assessable is, however, in the plural, which shifts the focus of the

evaluation from a particular event in Ella's life to the fact that these kinds of events take place in general. In this way, Arja seems to orient towards the fact that she has no direct access to Ella's son wedding but she has access to similar events, towards which she has an affective stance. While proceeding to the part of the utterance marked as a paraphrase of the turn by the particle *et* (line 14) (see VISK § 1032), however, she self-interrupts and launches a new unit prefaced by *mä en tiedä* 'I don't know' (line 15). Keevallik (2016) has described the practice of discarding stalled topical sequences in Estonian: when a speaker self-interrupts a unit-in-progress, and contingently launches a new one that begins with *ma ei tea* 'I don't know'. This is exactly what happens in this extract: the following unit in Arja's turn is no longer evaluating Ella's becoming a mother-in-law or respective events in life but instead the church service earlier that day.

The affective evaluation is in a zero-person form (*tänään Ø tuntu kirkossa <kauheen> mukavaltah 'Ø felt awfully good at church today'*), which offers the subjective experience of feeling good as a shared one (Laitinen 2006). This offer is not accepted in Ella's response (line 18). The *mm* acknowledges Arja's evaluation but does not agree that the experience was mutually shared. Arja's following turn orients to the lack of an affiliative response by providing an account for the evaluation: *kato ku Pasi oli* '(you see) because Pasi was [there]'. Ella's response turn (lines 21–22) begins with a confirmation that consists of a verb and a response particle (*oli juu*). This formulation asserts agreement with the assessment

but implies that there is nothing to add to what has been said and is thereby a closure of the topic (Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2009). The following utterance (oikeen- (.) *oikeen (he) oli* ‘quite- (.) quite (it) was’, line 22) is formulated as a predicate nominal clause, which nevertheless lacks the predicate nominal. It thus looks like an evaluation but has no evaluative element. As such, it basically has the same function as the preceding verb plus particle response: it implies that there is nothing more to add and, thereby, is a closure of the topic. Moreover, the way in which the turn is formulated shifts the perspective from a personally experienced feeling to a more distanced statement on the state of affairs (‘Ø felt’ vs ‘it was’).²

Apparently, however, Arja is not yet ready to close the topic. Instead, she produces a new affective evaluation (*voi hyvänen aika sentään* ‘oh good heavens’, line 23) followed by a paraphrasing account (*ihan niinku isä olis tullu kotiin* ‘(it was) like father had come home’, lines 24–25). The response that this turn receives is quite different from Ella’s previous responses. It begins with a change-of-state token *ai ja(h)a* (line 26) (Koivisto 2017) which treats Arja’s previous turn as news rather than as an

² The anonymous referee suggested that Ella could be avoiding self-praise because the praise is for her husband and she therefore might inherit some of the praise. In Finnish conversations, compliments are usually accepted either in a straightforward manner or by giving the credit to someone else (e.g. ‘You have a nice haircut’ ‘Oh thank you, I have such a brilliant hairdresser’) (see Etelämäki, Haakana & Halonen 2013). Had Ella treated the turn as a possible compliment, she would have had the option of responding, e.g., by saying ‘Yes, Pasi is such a good priest, isn’t he?’. However, Ella does give an affective-evaluative response (line 26) after Arja’s upgraded evaluation ‘oh good heavens ((it was)) like father had come home’ (23–24), and adds ‘someone else said the same thing’ (lines 28–29). If Ella was avoiding self-praise in this example, it seems hardly convincing that she would confirm, and actually upgrade the praise in her next turn by saying that she has heard the same praise from someone else as well.

assessment, followed by a telling that someone else (in the congregation) had said the same thing to Ella (lines 28–29). The turn is produced with laughter that responds to the affiliation-seeking character of Arja’s previous turn. Arja’s *ihan totta* ‘really’ marks Ella’s telling as news to Arja and in this way asks her to continue the topic. The talk turns to the role of the vicar as the father of the congregation.

3. What happens in this sequence of talk?

There are no clear signs of misunderstanding such as repair-initiators or repairs in this sequence. Yet, the participants have difficulty arriving at an agreement of a mutual stance. This can be seen in Ella’s lack of sufficiently agreeing responses, and in Arja’s pursuit of responses. In order to understand the trouble here, I discuss the relationship between the participants in terms of assessables, and the formulation of their affective evaluations.

As noted above, Ella is the wife of the vicar, Arja is a member of the congregation, and the reason for the call is connected to church activities. Although the participants apparently know each other quite well, the conversation is semi-institutional. We join the conversation at a point at which the institutional matters have been dealt with. I suggest that the trouble in this sequence of talk lies in the fact that Ella is continuously

orienting towards the institutional nature of the call whereas Arja is formulating her affective evaluative turns in a manner that seeks to create a more intimate relationship with Ella and the assessables.

Let us examine lines 2–8 in the segment above in more detail. When Ella proposes ending the call, Arja introduces a new topic that concerns an event in Ella’s personal life:

02 Arja: [nii. ja o-
PRT PRT 1-
yes. and c-

03 sulle o:nnea kuule kun sä olet
you-ALL luck PRT PRT 2SG be-2SG
congratulations PRT for you are

04 anoppih.
a mother-in-law

05 Ella: no [↑]kiitos kiitos.
PRT thank you thank you
PRT thank you thank you

06 Arja: nii[:.
PRT
yes

[

07 Ella: [no nii, tässä on semmosta
 PRT PRT DEM1-INE/PRT be-3 DEM3.ADJ-PAR
 well yes. such a fresh (thing)

08 t::uoretta tapahtunu.=
 fresh-PAR happen-PPPC
 has taken place

The topic-elicitation is formulated as congratulations followed by the reason for congratulating. The reason is formulated as a declarative *kuule ku sää olet anoppi* (KUULE for you are a mother-in-law) which gives a sense of informing or announcing to the turn. Although it is likely that the whole congregation knew that the vicar's absence was due to his son's wedding, the declarative formulation of Arja's turn, as well as the fact that Ella, in lines 7–8, confirms that the wedding has taken place, gives reason to believe that Ella and Arja have not discussed the wedding at any earlier point in time.

The congratulations and the reason for congratulating take for granted that this event has taken place in Ella's life. In other words, Arja's turn assumes a knowing status on an issue that belongs essentially to Ella's private life, but which has not been discussed between the two earlier. Moreover, it implies an affective evaluative stance towards the issue. We can see in the example that Ella resists expanding on the topic and affiliating with the affective evaluation. By neither elaborating on her new

- 14 ihania asioita et jo- (.)
wonderful-PL-PAR thing-PL-PAR PRT so-
wonderful things that so-
- 15 jotenkin niin .hhhh mä en tiedä, (.)
somehow so 1SG NEG-1SG know
somehow so .hhhh I don't know
- 16 tänään Ø tuntu kirkossa
today Ø feel.PST.1SG church-INE
Ø felt awfully good at church today
- 17 <kauheen> mukavalt[ah,
awful-GEN nice
[
- 18 Ella: [mm.
- 19 Arja: =(kato) ku Pasi olih.
PRT lnameM be-PST.3SG
(you see) because Pasi was ((there))
- 20 (.)
- 21 Ella: oli juu. oikeen- (.)
be-PST.3SG PRT very
it was yes quite- (.)

oh good heavens

24 *ihan niinku isä ois tullu*
quite PRT father be-CON.3 come-PPC
(it was) like father had come

25 *kotiih::.*
home-ILL
home

26 *Ella:* *ai jaɛ(h)a[h hah hah haahɛ]*
PRT PRT
oh I see
[

27 *Arja:* *[ɛniih hih hih .hhhɛ]*

28 *Ella:* *.hh jo(h)oku mu(h)u sano*
someone else say-PST.3
someone else said

29 *muuten samalla lailla et*
by-the-way same-ADE way-ADE PRT
by the way the same so

30 *Arja:* *[↑ihan tottah.*
quite true-PAR
really

- [
- 31 *Ella:* [kyl kai se
PRT probably DEM3.SG
indeed it probably
- 32 *Ella:* .hh jooh:: .hhh et kyl kai se
PRT PRT PRT probably DEM3.SG
yes .hhh so indeed it probably
- 33 *Ella:* jotenki- tai samanhenkisesti
someho- or same-spirited
someho- or in the same spirit
- 34 et kyl kai se jotenkin on
PRT PRT probably DEM3.SG somehow be-3
so indeed it probably is
- 35 näin että: että (.) tommonen jo (.)
DEM1.MAN PRT PRT DEM2.ADJ already
so that: that (.) that kind of
- 36 .hhh pitkään ollu vähä hhvanhempi kaveri
long be-PPC bit older guy
a slightly older guy (who's) already been (in
the
the congregation) for a long time
- 37 niin on sitten- semmonenhh [.hh

PRT be-3 then DEM3.ADJ

so (he) is then a kind of

[

38 Arja:

[ni.

PRT

yes

39 Ella: omalla tavallansa >semmonen< no

own-ADE way-ADE-POSS DEM3.ADJ PRT

in his own way a kind of well

40 Ella: seurakunnan isähän se on

congregation-GEN father-CLI DEM3.SG be-3

the congregation's father he is

41 sitte kui>tenki.<

then anyway

In her response to Arja's description *ihan niinku isä ois tullu kotiin*: 'it was like father had come home', Ella states that someone else had said the same thing. The reference form she uses (*joku muu* 'someone else') is an indefinite, generalizing one although it is likely that Ella knows who this 'someone else' is. What is crucial is not the identity but the category of that other person, an attendee at the service.³ In this way, Ella is able to distance herself from Arja's affective evaluation but simultaneously tell Arja that her

³ I thank the anonymous editor for this observation.

experience is shared by at least one other member of the congregation. Ella thereby restores her own institutional role as the wife of the vicar as well as the institutional relationship between herself and Arja, while also confirming the validity of Arja's experience by putting her on a par with the other members of the congregation.

4. Intersubjectivity in interaction

In conversation analytic tradition, intersubjectivity is understood to be a by-product of turn-taking organization, which is one of the most profound organizations in any conversation (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Heritage 1984). Every next turn provides a public display of its speaker's understanding of the previous turn. Should the speaker of the previous turn find this understanding problematic in one way or another, the third (and fourth) position provides a chance to initiate a repair (Schegloff 1992). If no repairs are initiated, the claim is that the participants are in an intersubjective understanding (regardless of what they actually think). It is thus the turn-taking organization and repair organization that set the grounds for intersubjectivity (Schegloff 1992; Sidnell 2014).

It is true that neither the participants of a conversation nor we as analysts have direct access to the mental life of another person, and that we cannot make claims of problems in understanding if we cannot base our

claims on what is present in the data. I do, however, suggest that we can claim problems in intersubjectivity beyond the organization of repair: that there is a problem in intersubjectivity behind at least some non-agreements and disagreements.

In his classic article, Schuetz (1953) wrote that in everyday life, we know that the objects in our shared world do not mean exactly the same to us, because:

- (i) I, being 'here', am at another distance from and experience other aspects as being typical of the objects than he, who is 'there'. For the same reason, certain objects are out of my reach - - but within his and vice versa.
- (ii) My and my fellowman's biographically determined situations, and therewith my and his purposes at hand and my and his system of relevances originating in such purposes, must needs differ, at least to a certain extent. (Schuetz 1953: 8)

In everyday life, we can, however, overcome the differences in individual perspectives because of the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints and the idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances:

(i) The idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints: I take it for granted – and assume my fellowman does the same – that if I change places with him so that his ‘here’ becomes mine, I would be at the same distance from things and see them in the same typicality as he actually does; moreover, the same things would be in my reach which are actually his. (All this vice versa.)

(ii) The idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances: Until counter-evidence I take it for granted – and assume my fellowman does the same – that the differences in perspectives originating in my and his unique biographical situations are irrelevant for the purpose at hand of either of us and that he and I, that ‘We’ assume that both of us have selected and interpreted the actually or potentially common objects and their features in an identical manner or at least an ‘empirically identical’ manner, namely, sufficient for all practical purposes. (Schuetz 1953: 8)

I will now put Schuetz’ philosophical suggestion into practice by applying it to the piece of interaction between Ella and Arja. As I see it, the interaction becomes problematic because the two participants’ idealizations do not concur sufficiently for the purposes at hand, that is, for the assessment activity. The differences between Ella and Arja’s biographical situations become relevant – and problematic – for the purposes at hand when Arja points out events in life, namely the wedding and the church service, of

which the participants have a very different perspective, and provides an affective interpretation of them that is formulated in a manner that does not take into account this difference. As a consequence, Ella's and Arja's perspectives of the wedding lack reciprocity. Moreover, the women do not seem to share an understanding of their mutual relationship or of the nature of the ongoing conversation. Whereas Arja is orienting towards the conversation as an intimate conversation between friends, Ella is orienting towards their institutional roles and working towards keeping the conversation institutional. In other words, their standpoints are not interchangeable nor do their systems of relevances concur (for all practical purposes): this becomes visible in the sequential unfolding of the conversation, in Arja insisting on her affective evaluations and Ella resisting them.

Arja's and Ella's different orientations towards the conversation and their respective roles in it (everyday vs institutional) can also be described as differences in typification (see Schuetz 1953). Arja and Ella typify the interaction and themselves in respect to each other in ways that do not match. Towards the end of the extract, the mutual understanding of the participants' relationship with each other and the assessable(s) is restored, that is, the typifications they have of each other and the situation meet sufficiently for the conversation to move on from the assessing activity to discussing the vicar's role as the 'father' of the congregation.

My suggestion is thus that while construing and maintaining intersubjectivity, the participants of an interaction are also constantly working to typify and retypify the 'self', the 'other', and respectively, the 'we' (see Schuetz 1953: 11-14). The relation between the 'self' and the 'other' – 'we-ness' – is a dynamic process in which the participants constantly position themselves towards each other as well as towards the world, and only a sufficient joint understanding of the 'we' provides the grounds for reciprocity of perspectives, for intersubjectivity for all practical purposes, and for joint social action.

Schegloff (1992) claims that the fourth position is the last structurally provided defence of intersubjectivity in conversation because it is the last structurally provided place for initiating repair. However, as my analysis shows, initiating and accomplishing repair are not the only means for restoring intersubjectivity in interaction, and repair sequences are not the only places in which intersubjectivity problems can come visible in conversation. Intersubjectivity has more dimensions than the mere turn-by-turn unfolding of mutual understanding. These dimensions can become visible in, for example, assessment sequences. Assessments reveal the participants' relation to the assessables – that is, to the world. In order to reach a mutual agreement on each other's' assessments, the participants need to have sufficiently reciprocal perspectives, and for this they need to typify themselves and each other in a sufficiently congruent way. In other words, they need to have a sufficiently mutual understanding of the 'we'.

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