

Co-presence during Lapses: On “Comfortable Silences” in Finnish Everyday Interaction

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Abstract

This study examines video-recorded, naturally occurring Finnish dyads focusing on lapses (inter-sequential silences). During most lapses, participants undertake bodily activities or behaviors (Hoey 2015). Adding to previous work, this study describes “comfortable” silences where participants share the moment with no bodily activities or mutual gaze, inhabiting the silence with simple co-presence. The analysis suggests that instead of the gathering/encounter dualism, participant behavior in social situations is better described as a continuum of orientations. Also during the “comfortable” silences, understanding of behavioral involvements is intersubjectively created and maintained. Thus, even outside of sequences that allegedly create and maintain the “architecture of intersubjectivity” (Heritage 1984), social organization is jointly negotiated and achieved, most importantly by mutual monitoring and reciprocation of (bodily) orientations.

Keywords: lapse, silence, gathering, encounter, co-presence, embodiment, conversation analysis, Finnish

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1 Introduction: Co-presence and Social Situations

Co-presence – being with other people in the same space at the same time – enables participants to mutually monitor one another's actions and behavior with their senses. In these social situations, individuals are conscious of possibly being also similarly monitored by the other(s). (Goffman 1964, 1978.) Based on the kinds of behavioral obligations and normative expectations pertaining to a given situation, Goffman (1964) divides social situations into gatherings and encounters. They are organized differently and different social orders prevail in them when it comes to, among other issues, talking. In an encounter, participants share a joint orientation: they are, for instance, having a conversation. The participants jointly sustain their attention on a single (yet moving) focus, both visually and cognitively. Many rules determine the ways in which individuals behave in an encounter, for instance how they initiate and terminate it, and how participants enter into and depart from it. (Goffman 1964.)

The other type of social situation, gathering, is a situation where two or more individuals are in a shared space without a joint focus of attention – for instance, people walking on a street or strangers riding an elevator. Participants in a gathering can be oriented to various things, not engaged with one another, and often they are silent and unacquainted. There are, however, normative expectations and behavioral obligations concerning how to behave in these situations, too, for instance when it comes to the physical distance between the individuals. (Goffman 1957, 1963, 1964, 1978.)

Approaching transformations between gatherings and encounters, Mondada (2009, see also De Stefani & Mondada 2018) has shown how a common interactional space – that is, an encounter – is achieved multimodally, transforming incidental and silent co-present persons (in a gathering) to co-participants in focused interaction. This article investigates situations that, at least seemingly, may fall somewhere in between gatherings and encounters. These situations are initially organized as encounters: two adults who know each other well sit around a table, one visiting the other, and have a relaxed chat. These encounters, however, include moments when the joint focus of attention – the conversation – ceases and neither of the participants says anything, and in some cases they do not do anything else either. The article explores whether the notions of gathering and encounter – which have not yet been empirically thoroughly examined – could be helpful also in analyzing these cases. The central

question is: How to understand and analyze these situations that look like encounters and are initiated and most of the time also maintained as such, but then, momentarily, transform into something different? Is it appropriate to describe these moments with Goffman's dualistic terminology as gatherings, or do we need something more, or something else, instead? In this paper, it will be shown that a more dynamic approach in analyzing naturally occurring conversational data actually challenges Goffman's categorization of social situations into two distinct types.

Furthermore, I will also discuss how the social order of each type of social situation – the participants' coordinated understanding of the nature of the situation and the behavioral involvements – is intersubjectively created and maintained between the participants, as well as how transitions between the situation types are achieved. One crucial issue here is whether there is talk or silence; as Goffman (1978: 813) writes, “[i]n every society, one can contrast occasions and moments for silence with occasions and moments for talk.” The participants' embodied behavior, such as their gaze and body postures, is also highly important for the analysis. Accepting the importance of sequence organization for intersubjectivity (e.g., Heritage 1984), I will argue that the organization of the ongoing social situation is also jointly negotiated and intersubjectively achieved outside of sequences. The following section will elaborate on this topic.

The empirical starting point of this study is a lapse, which in conversation analytic literature has been defined as the silent moment that

may occur at a sequence ending when all participants forgo the option to speak and no specific turn is being expected next (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). Literature on lapses will be reviewed next.

2 Empirical Background: Lapses as Silent Moments in Interaction

In conversation analytic literature, silent moments that sometimes occur in conversations have been divided into three categories based on the specific point in a turn and sequence at which they occur (Sacks et al. 1974). *Pause* is a silent moment within one speaker's turn before its projected completion. *Gap*, on the contrary, occurs between two turns within a sequence. It is silence at a moment when a certain turn-at-talk is expected to occur – for instance, when a second pair-part is expected after a first pair-part, such as an answer after a question. There is a whole body of literature on gaps and the impact and meaning they may carry in conversation (e.g., Jefferson 1989, Kendrick & Torreira 2015, Mushin & Gardner 2009, Pietikäinen 2018, Stivers et al. 2009), whereas the third silence type, *lapse*, has been investigated much less. Lapse is the silent moment that may occur at a sequence ending when all participants forgo the option to speak and no specific turn is being expected (Sacks et al. 1974). A lapse thus occurs between sequences, after “rounds of possible self-selection” (Sacks et al. 1974). These silences do not “belong” to anyone: no one has been selected

as the next speaker, and no one has self-selected. It is thus everyone's and no one's responsibility to end the silence and resume talking again.¹

When a lapse emerges, the participants may orient to it in different ways, as has been shown by Hoey (2015, 2020). They may treat the silence as (1) “now relevant” and begin being engaged with an activity that precludes simultaneous talking, such as doing individual assignments in a shared space (see Szymanski 1999) or making a phone call in the midst of a face-to-face conversation. Participants also may treat the emerging silence as (2) “allowable”, whereupon they, instead of maintaining conversation, orient to an alternative engagement such as “watching television”, or “sharing a car ride” and just gazing forward in the moving vehicle. In these situations, talking remains an option but is not specifically expected, as the current focus is elsewhere and the silent moment is occupied by another activity.²

Participants may also orient to the lapse as (3) potentially problematic or “awkward” – in Hoey's (2015) words, as “the conspicuous absence of talk”. This orientation is visible in the participants' embodied and/or vocal behavior during the lapse. The participants may disengage bodily via, for

¹ Contrary to Hoey (2015, 2020), I thus define the types of silences solely based on the sequential environment, not on the participants' (bodily) behavior during a given silence that may indicate their orientation to relevance of talk. Thus for me, *gap* is a silence after a turn that clearly expects a response, whereas *lapse* is a silence after a potential sequence-ending turn – and during them both, various bodily behaviors may or may not occur. In other words, participants can orient to both gaps and lapses in different ways.

² This type of moments are sometimes also called ‘continuing states of incipient talk’ (see Schegloff & Sacks 1973: 324–326, Berger, Viney, & Rae 2016).

instance, drinking, eating, self-grooming, or yawning (see, e.g., Hoey 2017a, Luopa 2016) – i.e., occupying themselves with bodily behaviors that do not constitute a recognizable alternative activity for that moment (in contrast to activities such as jointly watching television, as described above).³ Some of these bodily activities are such that their endpoint is (more or less) projectable, such as taking a sip from a coffee cup, and participants may methodically exploit these projectable trajectories to manage the lapse in a range of ways: initiating such embodied activity when entering a lapse and resuming talking when that activity reaches its projectable completion, or timing either the initiation or the termination of the embodied activity to coincide with the lapse boundaries (Vatanen 2018). Further possibilities for the participants to deal with lapses are to recomplete the prior sequence that had already been completed (Hoey 2017b), or to use other verbal means such as certain particles (Luopa 2016).

These lapse management strategies support Sacks's (1992: 225) claim concerning situations and settings organized for sustained talk-in-interaction that “under the more general rule of the turn-taking techniques we’re dealing with, silence is a terrible thing. The turn-taking rules say that somebody should be talking all the time; not more than one person, but somebody”. At these moments, the turn-taking machinery provides no next speaker or next thing-to-do. The previous sequence has been completed, and

³ These behaviors have also been called ‘auto-involvements’ (e.g., Goffman 1963, Goodwin 1986).

often the topic has been exhausted, too. Indeed, in the literature, lapse behaviors have been linked to the feeling of embarrassment. According to Heath (1988: 156–157), embarrassment may surface “in circumstances in which the nature of the individual’s involvement in interaction is at issue or ambiguous” and when “persons are found in each other’s immediate co-presence whilst lacking a mutually coordinated activity to which they are committed” (see also Hoey 2017a: 161). Furthermore, some studies suggest that lapses are moments that participants may experience as ambiguous or even “painful” (see, e.g., Goffman 1967: 120 on “interaction-consciousness”; also McLaughlin & Cody 1982).

Experiencing lapses as ambiguous moments in interaction also relates to intersubjectivity. Lapses by definition occur outside of sequences of turns-at-talk, and it has been claimed that it is the sequential organization of talk that creates and sustains the “architecture of intersubjectivity” in interaction (Heritage 1984, Schegloff 1992, Deppermann 2015). Consequently, when a lapse emerges, it produces a moment in interaction when this architecture does not support the flow of interaction (or, more generally, togetherness): nothing has been projected to occur next, at least not in the same way as within sequences. (See also Hoey 2017a: 176.)

However, it is turn-taking and sequence organization that also provide for the occurrence of lapses. When a sequence has been brought to a close and no one self-selects, a lapse may occur. As discussed above, there are various bodily behaviors and activities that may be exploited to account for

the lapse (see also Goodwin 1981) and thus offer a way to be (more) “comfortably” silent. In addition to the three ways to orient to a lapse identified by Hoey (2015) – as now-relevant, allowable, or awkward – the current study finds that participants have one more way in which they may deal with the lapse, which will be examined in the following sections. The main focus here will be on situations where there is no talk or other activities or involvement going on during the silent moment, and still the moment seems not to be oriented to as awkward or painful. Instead, the participants “comfortably” share the silent moment without doing anything visible. The participants’ observable behavior during the lapse suggests that they create, negotiate, and most often eventually share an intersubjective understanding of the lapse as a silent moment where it is possible to simply be together with the other, to just sit still and be there, inhabiting the silent moment with mere co-presence. At these moments, talking is not specifically expected, even though the participants are not engaged with any observable activity.

In this study, I will thus show that even outside the organization of sequences, which has been said to create and sustain the “architecture of intersubjectivity” as reviewed above, the organization of the ongoing social situation is jointly negotiated and intersubjectively achieved, most importantly by mutual monitoring and reciprocation of (bodily) orientations. The analysis below will discuss silent moments where “nothing happens,” as well as cases where participants are engaged in certain activities. I will

also reflect upon the notions of gathering and encounter and their applicability for analyzing these kinds of silent moments in social situations.

3 Data and Methodology

The data for this study consist of three hours of video-recorded, naturally occurring dyadic everyday interactions in Finnish where the participants are friends or family members. The settings and participant configurations investigated here are, at least seemingly, organized for sustained talk: they mostly involve a visit by a friend. At these moments, the participants are together (mainly) for the sake of interaction, and there seems to be a joint, moral and normative commitment to socialize. Moreover, the participants are seated around a table in the kitchen or in adjacent armchairs in the living room. They are thus spatially positioned as if they were in a focused encounter.

During most of the identified 130 lapses (at least two seconds long) in the data, participants engage in embodied activities such as eating, drinking, or stroking a cat, or they produce some vocal or verbal elements such as particles. However, in altogether 15 of the lapses in the data, either one or both participants display no “lapse-management devices” at all. Instead, they remain silent, with constant bodily orientations, not engaged in (visible) side involvements (Goffman 1963). These moments are the main

focus of this study, even though I will also use some of the other cases to illustrate the boundaries of the phenomenon. In my analyses, I use multimodal conversation analysis (Mondada 2016; on conversation analysis in general, see Sidnell & Stivers 2013) and present close moment-by-moment analysis of such lapses, focusing on participants' verbal and embodied conduct in the situated, material environment.

4 On Ways to Orient to Lapses: Towards the “Comfortable” Silence

I will start the analysis with interactional moments where the participants are, apart from talking, also occupied with other activities such as eating. The participants thus have their focus on a joint activity – the same activity, albeit accomplished individually. From this type of case I will move on to instances where no such activities are used.

In the first excerpt, the participants are seated at the kitchen table and eating a warm meal. Eating is also what they do during the silent moment that emerges, which makes this case an activity-occupied lapse – and hence, at least at first sight, an “allowable” silence where talking remains an option while the participants are involved in some other activity (Hoey 2015). Here two middle-aged sisters, Pirjo visiting Teija (see Fig. 1.1), are talking about what their families usually have for Christmas dinner. The sisters are occupied with eating, already close to finishing their meals. During the

whole fragment, their gazes remain at their plates or elsewhere on the table. Before the fragment, Teija has reported on the main course at her family's Christmas dinner and how to prepare it, to which Pirjo has responded with the acknowledgment token *mm*. This exchange is followed by a lapse, and after 6.4 seconds of joint eating in silence, Pirjo reports on the dish that her family usually has (line 1).⁴

Excerpt 1: Sg 437, 40–50: 09:45

01 PIR: **meill_on aina valkosipulipe°runat°?**
we always have garlic potatoes

02 (2.0)

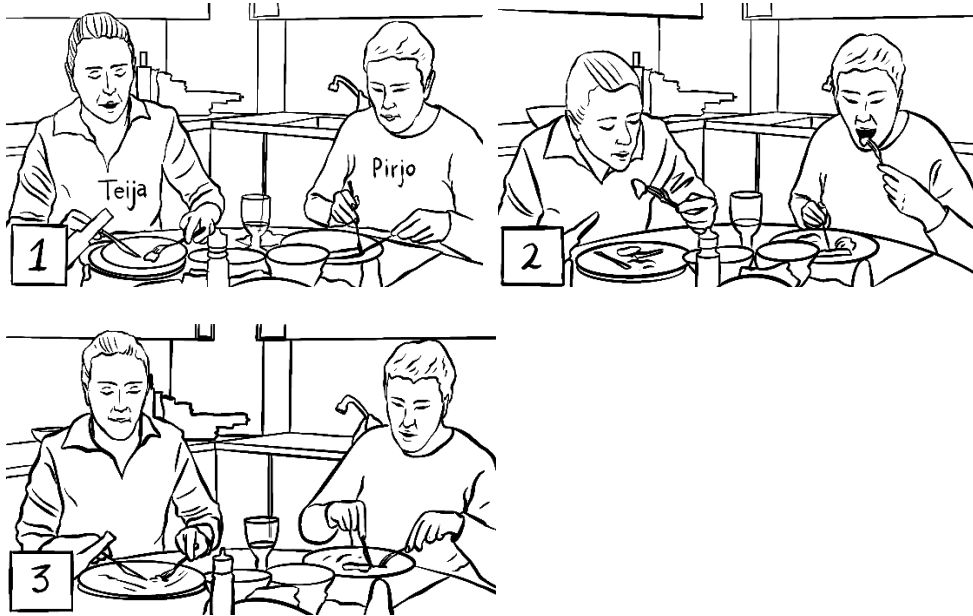
03 TEI: **ne on kans kyl* hyvät?**
they are indeed good as well
fig *fig1.1

04 (0.3) * (6.9) (=7.2)
fig *fig1.2

05 PIR: **mut* niinku tosiaan ni, (0.2) m nyt tänä**
but anyway so (0.2) now this
fig *fig1.3

06 **jouluna sitte kir[↑]si saa valii että,**
Christmas Kirsi can then make the choice that,

⁴ The verbal and vocal features in the examples are transcribed according to the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004). Embodied features of the excerpts are mostly captured by illustrations (drawn based on still images of the video) attached to the transcript. These illustrations are aimed at capturing the central features of the during-lapse activities; when there is a change in the participants' activities or, for instance, body postures, there is a new image. The multimodal transcription follows Mondada's (2019) conventions.



Figures 1.1–1.3 of Excerpt 1.

Teija assesses Pirjo’s announcement positively (line 3), after which another longish silence ensues (line 4). During lines 1–3, both participants put food on their forks, their gazes down (Fig. 1.1), and as soon as Teija finishes her turn (line 3), they both put food in their mouth (Fig. 1.2). During the silence, they both chew their food, gazing at the table; Pirjo also prepares another portion onto her fork. Pirjo then resumes talking (line 5), still gazing down, and Teija does not raise her eyes either (Fig. 1.3). The silent moment here partly resembles a gathering where silent, co-present persons all engage in some activity (such as participants in a gymnastics class). However, mainly due to the relatively short length of the silence surrounded by talk, and also the participants’ relationship to one another, it seems more reasonable to claim that this is an activity-occupied encounter and an “allowable” silence

where the participants' focus is on joint activity of sharing a meal. Due to their body postures and gaze direction they are able to monitor one another's activities, and their orientations are reciprocated. Given that it is culturally not favorable to talk with one's mouth full, the silent moment could perhaps even be analyzed as a "now-relevant" lapse for the participants.

In the above case, the overall activity of eating was already going on long before the lapse occurred and was then continued during it; furthermore, the participants temporally positioned the action of bringing food into the mouth at a potential sequence boundary. In the following case, in contrast, the activity taken up during the lapse – savoring chocolate – is prepared only shortly prior to the lapse and is initiated when the lapse emerges. Thus the use of the activity seems more strategic than in the case examined above by virtue of being prompted by the current interactional contingencies, and in that sense the participants might almost seem to treat the lapse as "awkward". However, there are also other ways to interpret the silence. In both of the lapses that occur in this fragment, the participants (Tarja visiting her friend Kati, see Figure 2.1) have more or less a joint, reciprocal orientation to the lapse: they involve themselves in the same activity, accomplishing it individually. The fragment begins with Tarja's report of how she the day before tasted the chocolate that she had recently bought:

Excerpt 2: Sg 398: 30:30

01 TAR: haukkasin semmosen ison palan ja
I bit a big piece and

02 rupesin pureksimaan sitä nii[n tota
started to chew it so uhm

03 KAT: [>joo<
yeah

04 TAR: arghhyä ahh he heh +he he+ .hh
kat +shakes head+

05 (0.5) * (3.0) * (2.1) ((=5.6))
*fig *fig2.1 *fig2.2*



Figures 2.1–2.2 of Excerpt 2.

06 KAT: * \uparrow mm. (0.4) hyviä.*
mm. tasty.
*fig *fig2.3 *fig2.4*

07 (4.0) * (1.0) ((=5.0))
*fig *fig2.5*

08 TAR: >njo niitä niitä< niitä ku syä niin kyllä
them them (-) when you eat them so indeed

09 menee suklaahimo hähh(viää) he[h heh he
your craving for chocolate disappears heh heh he

10 KAT: [fhhhhf ((nods))



Figures 2.3–2.5 of Excerpt 2.

Tarja reports on her tasting the newly bought chocolate (lines 1–2), ending her turn with a gestured and vocalized demonstration of its somehow unpleasant taste (line 4). The demonstration ends with laughter, and Kati responds with an appreciative head shake. After this a lapse emerges, during which Kati is the first one to put in her mouth a piece of chocolate (Fig. 2.1) she had just unwrapped during Tarja’s telling. At the same time, Tarja first puts the chocolate wrapper on the table (Fig. 2.1) and then puts the chocolate in her mouth (Fig. 2.2); she had also taken the chocolate and opened its wrapping during her previous telling. The participants’ understanding of the situation is thus reciprocated. For both of them, this is the first piece of chocolate they have taken from the bowl on the table. Tarja then lowers her hand from mouth a little bit, and Kati has almost finished with balling the wrapper in her hands (Fig. 2.3). At this moment Kati assesses the chocolate they are savoring with the gustatory *mm* (Wiggins

2002) and the evaluation token *hyviä* ‘tasty’ (line 6), thus using the environment – the ongoing activity – to generate talk (see Bergmann 1990, Hoey 2018). This lapse is, hence, filled with activity-relevant embodied action (chewing) as the participants, or at least Kati, focus on tasting the chocolate in silence (see Mondada 2018).

Tarja does not respond to Kati’s assessment, and they both continue to savor their chocolates in silence, gazing down (Fig. 2.4, line 7). This may suggest that the previous lapse is a “tasting silence” (Mondada 2018) only for Kati and not for Tarja. During the subsequent silence, they both still chew and savor the chocolate. Kati also continues to ball the wrapper in her right hand, and Tarja rubs her hands (Fig. 2.5). These minor movements somewhat resemble activities that are done during an “awkward” silence to make it more accountable (Hoey 2015, Luopa 2016). However, the movements are barely visible, and the participants do not really seem to be disturbed by the occurrence of the silent moment; in fact, it seems rather comfortable for them, as they do not engage in clearly visible “lapse-management behaviors”. Furthermore, even if not talking or gazing at one another, the participants sustain their bodily orientation towards each other and thus keep their orientation to the social situation intact. The lapse ends as Tarja, without any changes in her posture or embodied activity, starts talking (line 8), coming back to a prior topic (on ways to resume talking after a lapse, see Hoey 2018, Vatanen 2020). Only when Tarja starts talking does Kati lift her gaze to her.

The next case is an example of a lapse that is not occupied with any activity. Examining it suggests clearly that the three categories posed by Hoey (2015, 2020) do not capture all participant orientations to lapses that occur in my data. Here we have Pirjo telling her sister Teija about an incident in the past.

Excerpt 3: Sg 437: 57:35

01 PIR: sillai että sai sitten siisteissä vaast-
so that (she) then was able to put the little

02 a *↑vaatteis pikkusisko ni, (0.4)
sister in c- clean clothes (0.4)

fig *fig3.1

03 päiväk+o[tii ja, (.) [ja, (.) kaikki* kangas=
to day care and, (.) and (.) all canvas

tuu +gaze down

fig

*fig3.2

04 TEI: [mm.
mm

[nii?
yeah



Figures 3.1–3.2 of Excerpt 3.

05 PIR: =kengät ja [kaikki tämmöset #näi#,
shoes and all such things

06 TEI: [°.tjoo°
yeah

07 (0.1) * (0.2) * (6.5) * (0.2) ((=7.0))
fig *fig3.3 *fig3.4 *fig3.5



Figures 3.3–3.5 of Excerpt 3.

08 PIR: .mth mut ohan niinku niil justiin ni toi, (.)
.mth but it is (as you know) like they have that(.)

09 .hhhhhh tommiki* ni #se:# se on kans semmone,
.hhhhhh Tommi as well so he he is also such
 fig *fig3.6

10 .hh (0.4) @hän on hyvin #järkevä# ih*minen?@
.hh (0.4) he is a very sensible person
 fig *fig3.7



Figures 3.6–3.7 of Excerpt 3.

Teija responds to Pirjo's telling (lines 1–3 and 5) with the acknowledgment tokens *mm*, *nii* (line 4) and the inhaled *joo* (line 6) that in general implicates

closure (Sorjonen 2001: 280–283) and lack of involvement in the topic (Hakulinen 2010). Having gazed at Pirjo during the telling (Figure 3.1), Teija brings her gaze down (line 3, Figure 3.2) and does not look up for a long time. Pirjo crosses her arms upon finishing her telling, stabilizing her body posture, and for a couple tenths of a second, still gazes at Teija (Figure 3.3, line 7). She then brings her gaze down (Figure 3.4), and they both look at the table for almost seven seconds (see Figure 3.5 with no visible differences compared to Figure 3.4). Both still gazing down, Pirjo starts another telling. She looks up at Teija only when saying the name of the main-character-to-be of the current telling (line 9, Figure 3.6). Her sister looks at her only in the end of line 10, at the end of Pirjo’s animated reported speech (see Figure 3.7).

During the 7-second lapse in this excerpt (line 7), the participants’ orientations are first not reciprocal, as Pirjo still gazes at Teija, orienting to a continuation of the sequence and topic (see McLaughlin & Cody 1982, Rossano 2012, Luopa 2016). After a couple tenths of a second – not receiving any more responses – she, however, adapts to her co-participant’s behavior and shifts her gaze to the table. For the rest of the lapse, they both look at the table, being totally motionless (compare Figures 3.4 and 3.5); Teija does not even pass her fingers through her hair, which she did before the lapse. The lapse ends when Pirjo simply starts talking about a related topic, tying it to the previous one with the conjunction *mut* ‘but’, the clitic particle *ki* ‘also’ and the anaphoric pronoun *niil* ‘they’, not specifying the

referent with a lexical noun (lines 8–9). Here no embodied behavior plays a role in ending the lapse (see Vatanen 2018, 2020).

In this case, the participants in a couple tenths of a second achieve an intersubjective, mutual understanding of the nature of the lapse. It becomes a moment of partial mutual disengagement: they do not talk or look at each other, nor do they display any orientation to lack of talk – features that normally characterize *encounters* (Goffman 1964). Nevertheless, the participants stay oriented towards one another with their bodies, not changing their postures. With their stable bodily orientations, they methodically inhabit the occasion of simple co-presence. Their behavior involves certain features of a gathering: though in the same physical space, they do not share a focus of (visual) attention. In that sense, they seem to momentarily re-form the encounter into a more gathering-like social situation. However, as they are acquainted, and have just been talking together and still maintain bodily orientation (excluding gaze) towards one another, *gathering* does not seem an appropriate label for the situation either. It seems thus clear that participants' behavior in social situations cannot be captured by the dual distinction between gatherings and encounters. Rather, a more dynamic analytic approach suggests a continuum of orientations.

This excerpt and other similar instances suggest that there is a fourth way to orient to a lapse, in addition to the three described by Hoey (2015, 2020). Thus, for the participants, the lapse may not only be “now-relevant,”

“allowable” or “awkward,” but also “comfortable”. These “comfortable” lapses are one possible form of co-presence that is available for participants – a way to be together (cf. Carbaugh, Berry, & Nurmikari-Berry 2006 on the “naturalness” of silence with regard to the Finnish culture; for other, similarly meaningful silences in certain American Indian cultures, see Basso 1970, Scollon 1985, and references therein).

Let us now look in more detail at cases where participants even more clearly negotiate their understandings of the ongoing situation.

5 On the Reciprocity of Orientations: Negotiating Understandings of the Lapse

As was already mentioned in some of the cases explored above, the participants’ orientations to the lapse are not always reciprocal, at least not from its very beginning. However, these cases seem to especially suggest that the social order of co-presence – shared understanding of how to be together and what the relevant activities are – is intersubjectively created, negotiated, maintained and transformed amongst the participants. In some cases, one participant adapts to the other’s orientation very quickly (as was the case in Excerpt 3), whereas in others, their orientations are non-reciprocal throughout the whole lapse. Let us now investigate an instance of each type.

In the following case, the sisters Teija and Pirjo sit at the kitchen table after having finished their meal. Pirjo has told Teija about the situation at her workplace, which is a state agency. Here she moves to a more general level, suggesting that the unit she works at is very inefficient (lines 1–6). Teija has responded to the telling only very minimally throughout, mostly gazing at and stroking the cat in her arms (see Fig. 4.1 below). Then a lapse emerges (line 8).

Excerpt 4a: Sg 437, 70–80: 06:35

01 PIR: eihän voi aatella sillai että valtiol ylläpidetään
one cannot (you know) think so that such units are

02 ni semmossii yksiköit joiss_ei saada mitään
maintained within the state that don't get anything

03 ai*kaseks et niit vaan pidetään niinkun;
accomplished so that they are only maintained like
fig *fig4.1

04 .hmmhh niinku sillailla ettäm; (0.6) et ne on vaan
.hmm like so that (0.6) that they are merely

05 niinku itseisarvo et me vaan* niinku työllistetään
an absolute value that we just like employ
fig *fig4.2

06 ite itteemme verova#roil [siel#?]*
ourselves by ourselves with tax money there

07 TEI: [mm:?? *
fig *fig4.3



Figures 4.1–4.2 of Excerpt 4a.

08 (0.5) * (6.5) * (4.8) * (1.0) ((=12.8))
 fig *fig4.4 *fig4.5 *fig4.6



Figures 4.3–4.6 of Excerpt 4a.

09 TEI: .mt tää röyhnä tuli nyt tähän sitteh. (0.2)
 .mt this purry creature got here then (0.2)

After Pirjo's generalizing statement (lines 1–6), Teija only utters *mm* (line 7), acknowledging her sister's telling (see Gardner 1997), while not committing to furthering the sequence or the topic.⁵ During her telling, Pirjo

⁵ It is not uncommon in the data that a lapse emerges in a situation where a topic (sometimes a narrative) is about to come to its end, and at least one of the participants does not further the topic or the sequence (see also Ex. 3 above). It is unfortunately not possible to elaborate on this phenomenon in this paper; see, however, McLaughlin and Cody (1982) and Luopa (2016) on responding minimally prior to a lapse.

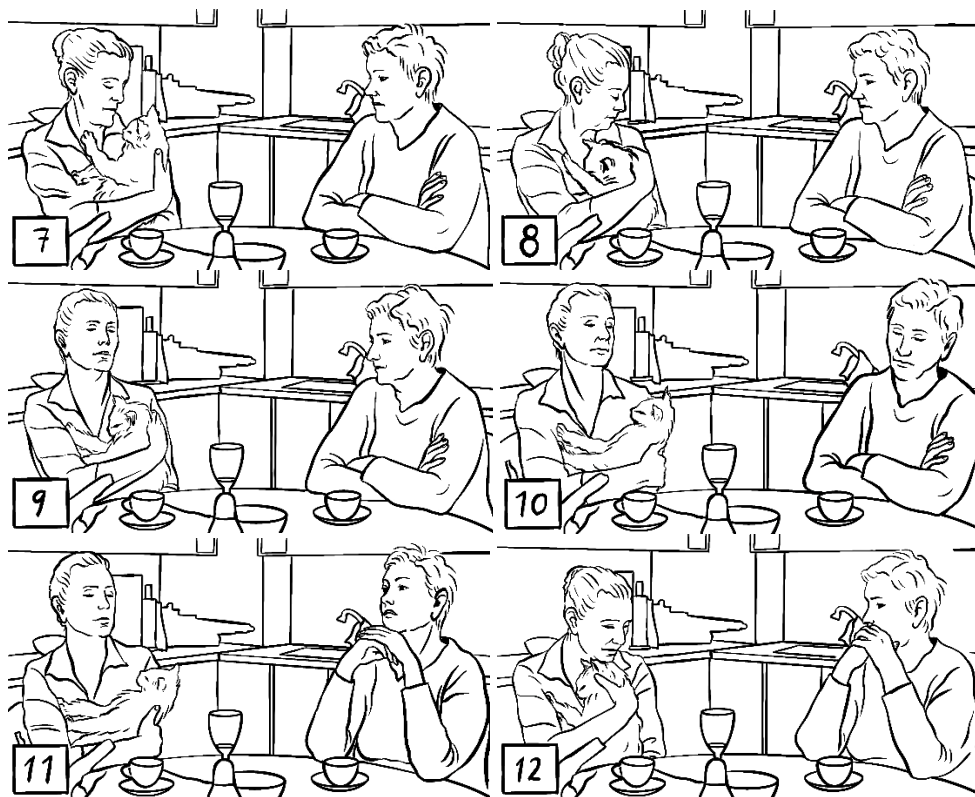
mostly gazes at her recipient Teija (see Figure 4.1), at times gesturing and gazing straight ahead (Figure 4.2); she returns to look at Teija at the end of her story (Figure 4.3). Teija still does not look up. For the first half second into the silence, Pirjo still gazes at Teija, orienting to a continuation of the sequence (Rossano 2012), but then shifts her gaze to the table, looking straight ahead (Figure 4.4). She thus adapts her orientation to the lapse to be similar as her sister's, not displaying (visible) orientation to the relevance of talk but rather orienting to the current moment as one which they can (comfortably) share by just being together in silence. Both participants remain in a static position for about six seconds. Teija continues to stroke and look at the cat in her arms, thus using an available resource to generate some physical activity, and Pirjo just gazes at the table. Pirjo then turns to look at the cat in her sister's arms (Figure 4.5), remaining in this position for the rest of the silence (for almost another six seconds; see Figure 4.6), while Teija constantly strokes the cat, looking at it. Remaining in a static position during the silence and not engaging in visible bodily activities (other than gazing at her sister's cat) suggests that Pirjo orients to the moment as one that does not need to be filled with such behaviors, but can simply be inhabited with joint co-presence.⁶ Not changing her body position or direction of gaze (see Vatanen 2020), Teija ends the lapse by commenting on the cat's arrival in her arms (line 9), even though that happened already a

⁶ Whether Pirjo's gaze at the cat in Teija's arms indicates a pursuit for a response from Teija is difficult to prove.

good while earlier, continuing then to report on its imagined thoughts (lines 10–11 below). She thus uses the material environment to generate more talk (see Bergmann 1990). Pirjo smiles slightly in response to Teija (see Figure 4.7 below) but does not say anything. Then another lapse emerges (line 12).

Excerpt 4b: Sg 437, 70–80: 06:35

- 10 TEI: **mt kuvittelee et se on nyt sitt_iha, (.)**
mt (it) imagines that it is now right (.)
- 11 ***.hhhh (.) niinku y:kköshommapaikas, (.) mm,**
.hhhh (.) like in the number one spot (.) mm
 fig *fig4.7
- 12 **(2.5) * (0.5) * (0.2) * (1.0) * (4.0) * (8.0) ((=16.2))**
 fig *fig4.8 *fig4.9 *fig4.10*fig4.11*fig4.12



Figures 4.7–4.12 of Excerpt 4b

13 TEI: mt *mutta kahdeksanteen asiasta ni olis kiva
mt but from one issue to the next, it would be nice
fig *fig4.13

14 et jos mattikii tulis sit nummelle?
that if Matti would also come then to Nummi

15 (0.8)

16 PIR: m↓m-m[m?



Figure 4.13 of Excerpt 4b.

During the second lapse in this fragment (line 12), Pirjo first looks at the cat and Teija stroking it (Figure 4.8) for a couple of seconds. Teija then straightens her posture, shifting her gaze straight ahead (Figure 4.9), after which Pirjo immediately adjusts her posture as well, shifting her gaze in her front on the table (Figure 4.10). Pirjo also lifts her arms up from the table, resting her chin on her hands and elbows on the table, gazing straight ahead (Figure 4.11). Both stay in these positions for approximately four seconds, after which Teija starts to rub her chin against the cat's head, and Pirjo immediately turns to look at them both, at the same time partly covering her mouth with her hands (Figure 4.12). Both keep these positions for eight more seconds, staying silent. Not changing her posture (Figure 4.13), Teija begins a new topic, also marking it as such by the idiom *kahdeksanteen*

asiasta ‘from one issue to the next.’ Here ending the lapse and resuming talking are achieved without any embodied action trajectories (cf. Vatanen 2018).

Both lapses in this excerpt are illustrations of the ways in which participants may inhabit the lapse and how they (may) adjust and adapt their bodily behavior and orientation to that of the co-participant, transforming their orientation which then becomes reciprocal. The situation here, similar to the one examined in Excerpt 3, somewhat resembles a gathering where individuals are in a shared space without a joint focus, not engaged in one another but still co-present. Individual activities, if available, may be used, but they do not become shared in the sense that both participants are engaged in the same activity. One participant, nevertheless, may look at what the other is doing – such as here when Pirjo looks at the cat that Teija strokes. However, the shared immediate past as well as the participants’ relationship and bodily configurations include encounter-like characteristics as well. In this situation, as in the one in Excerpt 3, the participants (for the most part of the time) orient to the lapse as “comfortable” – as a natural way to inhabit co-presence, and comfortably share the silence together.

In the following case, the participants’ orientations to the lapse are non-reciprocal almost throughout. Here Beea tells her friend Anne (see Figure 5.1), who is visiting her, about a certain city holiday destination where Beea has been with another friend of hers (called Mirva) and where Anne is planning to travel. Beea mentions a specific cheese served in that

city. Anne says she remembers having heard Beea talk about that, and then announces that now traveling there, she will taste the cheese, too (line 1). Beea acknowledges Anne's announcement (line 2) and continues by telling that she sometimes reminisces about the cheese with that friend of hers (lines 4–7), ending her turn with laughter-infused words (constructing her telling as laughable; Ford & Fox 2010). Anne responds to Beea's telling about the cheese-reminiscing just by smiling in mutual gaze with Beea (see Figure 5.1). After that, a lapse follows (line 8).

Excerpt 5: Sg 377: 26:15

01 ANN: kyl mäkin otan nyt friteerattua [juustoa,
I'm now going to have some deep-fried cheese too

02 BEE: [kkyllä? *yes*

03 (0.5)

04 BEE: sit mä aina välillä; (0.5)
then I every now and then (0.5)

05 välillä just mirvan kans kun on
every now and then with Mirva when (we)

06 tapaaminen nii mä muistelen °mirvan kans°
see each other I reminisce with Mirva

07 sitä fr(h)iteer(h)attua* j(h)uust(h)oa, hh .hh
about the deep-fried cheese hh .hh

fig *fig5.1

08 (1.0) * (2.0) * (2.0) * (3.2) * (0.3) ((=8.5))
 fig *fig5.2 *fig5.3 *fig5.4 *fig5.5



Figures 5.1–5.5 of Excerpt 5.

09 ANN: **mä menin eilen nälkä*senä kauppaan. .nmf**
I went yesterday to the store (being) hungry .nmf
 fig *fig5.6

10 (1.8) * (0.2)
 fig *fig5.7



Figures 5.6–5.7 of Excerpt 5.

11 ANN: **>mä ostin heti sen< pakaste:izzan**
I bought immediately the frozen pizza

After having smiled at Becca in response to her telling (Figure 5.1), Anne shifts her gaze down to the table and her smile slowly fades away (Figure 5.2). She continues leaning her chin on her hand, keeping this position for

the duration of the ensuing lapse. In less than a second after ending her telling, Beea lets go of the smile she had in the end of her telling (see the sharp change between Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2). Stirring her tea, she shifts her gaze after two seconds from Anne (Figure 5.2) to her own tea (Figure 5.3), and after another two seconds to Anne again (Figure 5.4).⁷ She thus orients to her co-participant and the possible continuation of their interaction (see Rossano 2012), but her co-participant continues not to orient to her, as if they were momentarily not “supposed to” engage with one another. Thus, for Anne, the silence is “comfortable”, one where the co-present persons just share the joint moment without orienting to one another in any hearable or visible way. After a total of 8 seconds of silence, Beea lifts her teacup (Figure 5.5) and prepares to take a sip. Immediately after this very visible activity, Anne begins to talk (see Vatanen 2018) by initiating a new topic about her grocery shopping the day before (line 9, Figure 5.6). To generate talk she thus uses an “unmentioned mentionable” (see Hoey 2018), an issue that could be talked about but so far has not. Anne still does not look at her recipient, who is in the middle of taking a sip from her teacup (Figure 5.6). A gap follows, and after a little over 1.5 seconds of silence, Anne shifts her gaze to her recipient, who smiles in response (Figure 5.7), after which Anne continues her telling (line 11).

⁷ Because of Beea’s glasses, we cannot be totally sure of her gaze direction; it may also be to the window behind Anne. Regardless, when looking in Anne’s direction, Beea is demonstrably oriented towards her.

In this excerpt, the participants' orientations during the lapse are somewhat non-reciprocal, even though they both continue in the same bodily configuration, facing each other at the table. The differing orientation manifests in other aspects of their bodily behavior: Anne orients to the lapse as a moment when interacting is not expected or relevant and it is possible to just stay quiet together (i.e., for her the lapse is "comfortable"), whereas Beea seems to orient to the situation as a focused encounter, despite the silence, checking every now and then whether her co-participant is available for interaction (and thus, for her, the lapse is at least partly "awkward").⁸ Here, however, neither of them adjusts their orientation, and hence the attempted negotiation does not lead to reciprocity.

This section has shown instances where negotiating understanding of the situation is rather explicit. During some of the examined lapses, such as the last one, the negotiation continues throughout the lapse and the participants' orientations remain non-reciprocal; however, this is not oriented to as a problem either. These examples thus illustrate how the social order of co-presence is negotiated, created, maintained and transformed intersubjectively amongst the participants.

⁸ In spite of these differing orientations and one participant's ostensible orientation to the lack of talk at that moment, I do not define the situation as a gap but as a lapse. This is in contrast to what Hoey (2015: 441) suggests, that an orientation to the lack of talk in the silent moment makes it gap-like. I have chosen to define a silent moment as either a gap or a lapse solely based on the sequential environment it occurs in.

6 Concluding Remarks: On Co-Presence and Its Intersubjective Transformation

When a lapse emerges, in most of the cases the participants do something about it: they orient to an alternative engagement such as eating, or they resort to other bodily behaviors such as self-grooming. They are said to do this to account for the lapse and to reduce the potential awkwardness of being silent together. Lapse-management devices may thus offer a way of being (more) comfortably silent. These devices are also argued to “permit situational presence without substantive involvement” in a way that the “participant is still officially engaged in the interaction, but is accountably involved with something else, and is therefore a less-than-eligible candidate for next speaker” (Hoey 2017a: 162). However, not all lapses involve these kinds of behaviors. The current study examined lapses where participants do something, as well as those during which ostensibly “nothing happens,” and yet the participants are engaged in the current social situation. In these cases, inhabiting the lapse and not doing anything embodied or manual at the same time seems *not* to be problematic for the participants. Instead, they seem to collaboratively (or, intersubjectively) transform the nature of the situation into something slightly different – it is a “comfortable” silence.

At these moments, the participants construct the nature of the situation as one where sustaining a joint focus of attention is no longer central. Instead, it is allowable and comfortable to stay quiet and still, each in their

own thoughts, and nonetheless maintain a shared sphere – the joint co-presence. This orientation is achieved by maintaining body postures towards the co-participant and by omitting the use of lapse-management behaviors. The lapse is thus constructed as one that does not need to be “managed” in any way but can simply be jointly inhabited. Using conversation analytic methods it is not possible to find out what the participants think and feel during these moments, and so the claims made here are solely based on the participants’ observable behavior.

In Goffman’s terms, it could be said that in these moments a typical encounter-type situation, where co-presence is very interactive (in addition to often being physical as well), is transformed to a more gathering-type situation where co-presence mainly involves physical presence only – in a certain way, it is simply co-presence.⁹ These moments, however, are not typical gatherings either. Rather, it seems that the nature of an encounter-type situation momentarily becomes fragile.

This study provides one attempt at operationalizing the notions of *gathering* and *encounter* in face-to-face interactions, and offers one way to approach what they are and how they are used. There are, however, certain issues that make the silent moments examined here different from those that are typically described as gatherings, such as strangers walking on the street. One is the way in which the state of talking is initiated after the silence. In

⁹ Somewhere between these two seems to fall the “situational presence” that Hoey (2017a: 162) mentions (see above).

the situations examined by Mondada (2009) it required specific steps to establish interaction between the persons. In contrast, at the end of the lapses examined here, talking is resumed without any specific preparations or effort, often even without establishing mutual gaze first. The silence ends as one of the participants just starts to talk, either coming back to some previous topic (as in Ex. 2) or starting a new one (as in Ex. 5). This easiness has to do with at least three issues: the participants know each other well (most often participants in “gatherings” are unacquainted), their configuration and the setting support joint interacting (cf. unplanned encounters between acquainted persons: De Stefani & Mondada 2018), and a short moment earlier, they have had a joint conversation. The same has been observed when people share long car rides: even though there are extended periods of silence, the state of talking can be (re-)established without any preparations or effort (Hoey 2015, Mondada 2012).

Regardless of whether there is talk or not, the participants may thus be engaged in and committed to one another and the joint co-presence, even without any lapse-management behaviors. Their commitment is visible in a slightly different manner, at least in that they maintain body postures which are oriented towards each other. Even though the sociality of the moment is somewhat different compared to moments where joint focus is maintained, it is still, in Goffmanian terms, a social situation. This article has demonstrated how the participants methodically inhabit the occasions that could be said to involve just shared co-presence. It is suggested that the

nature of the situation and its sociality (the social order of co-presence) are intersubjectively negotiated, created, maintained and transformed amongst the participants. The co-present participants may seamlessly move between types of social situations during the same event.

As discussed in Section 2, lapses emerge between sequences, at a point where a sequence has been potentially completed. At these moments the sequential organization of turn-by-turn talk that creates and maintains the “architecture of intersubjectivity” (Heritage 1984, Schegloff 1992, Deppermann 2015) does not support the participants and guide their interactional behavior (see Hoey 2017a: 176). However, the current data suggest that even outside of sequences, at moments when there is no talk and no turns have even been projected, the participants may reach an intersubjective understanding of the nature of the situation and the ways in which to behave in it. Here the role of embodied behavior is crucial.

These Finnish data suggest that when people who know each other well are spending time together, it is allowable – and, actually, comfortable – to have moments when no one says or does anything. People just are there together (cf. Carbaugh et al. 2006). As Gardner and Mushin (2015) have argued, when intimates are together in familiar surroundings, there may be a lack of pressure to talk. Moreover, Couper-Kuhlen (2010: 36) has suggested that these kinds of “[s]ocial gatherings - - are more common, perhaps even more basic, to human society than situations of ‘just talking’.” This paper thus offers an analysis of a type of situation that is arguably basic to human

sociality. Furthermore, as suggested already by Sacks (1992: 50), the ability to be silent together is a crucial issue in a relationship. Lapses may thus call forth considerations of what the silence may mean for and tell about the participants' relationship (Hoey 2017a: 162). Based on these findings, I suggest that the silent lapses where "nothing" happens are one way to construct the situation and the relationship as intimate and familiar.

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