

## Postscript: Thing and Space

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In this collection, the authors address the organization of interaction in which “things” play specific roles. Although the contexts and types of things the authors discuss are diverse, there are some common features. First, they are things locatable in a particular space; they are “spatial things.” Second, they are real, not imaginary; they are “sensory things.” That is, they are visible, tangible, audible, scentable, and the like. Third, they are artifacts, material things invented for a purpose. They have structures that are suitable for a certain distinctive activity, although these structures can serve purposes beyond their original design.

In this postscript, I attempt to outline what this volume contributes to the development of the study of how things with the above-mentioned features are perceived in interaction. I first present theoretical characterizations of sensory things whose meaning is emergently constituted in the temporal unfolding of interaction (Section 1). Next, a holistic view of space as an temporal arrangement of multiple bodies that exhibits orientations to each other and things in the environment of their interaction is presented (Section 2). In conclusion, I suggest in which directions studies of things in interaction can be further developed (Section 3).

### **Sensory things**

One encounters sensory things in the world through perception. One sees, touches, hears, tastes, and smells things. When one sees a thing, an artifact, one does not see first its shape, color, and the like, and then judge from these that a specific thing is there. One *directly* sees a pin (Nevile’s paper), Post-it<sup>®</sup> (Day & Rasmussen’s paper), forklift (Nevile & Wagner’s paper), a cup of coffee (Fele’s and DeStefani’s papers), and the like. Perception is an achievement, not a process, as Ryle (1949) observed. Therefore, investigation into perception of any modality should not be into a process (i.e., interpreting, judging, or whatever) that occurs somewhere, whether in mind or in the brain. Rather, what is seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled is exhibited (and becomes ascribable) in various activities involving the manipulation, observation, or inspection of things. In particular, when using an artifact, such as attaching a Post-it<sup>®</sup> somewhere and writing something on it, putting a pin on a dress under preparation, or riding on a forklift, the user’s grasping of intrinsic structures of the thing that differentiate between

the front and back, the top and bottom, the grip and tip, and the like, is also exhibited; a Post-it® has a surface, but does not have a grip or tip, and a pin has the grip and tip but does not a front or back.

Various “aspects” of things relevant to each ongoing activity are addressed by the authors in this volume. Wittgenstein (1953) distinguished between two kinds of seeing:

The one: “What do you see there?” — “I see this” (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: “I see a likeness between these two faces” — let the man I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself” (p. 193).

One can directly point to a thing that one sees, say, a pin, with “this” before mentioning its name or describing its various structural features, or one can show others the thing that one sees by drawing its picture. However, one cannot directly point to the likeness between two (photographed) faces with “this”, or one cannot show the recipient the likeness that one sees by copying these two faces. In this manner, the recipient may be shown these two faces, but not the likeness. One can offer the recipient some explanations of why and how one sees the likeness there, and these explanations may induce the recipient’s seeing the likeness, although there have not been any changes in the faces. The latter type of seeing is called “aspect-seeing.”

The same Post-its®, pins, or textural formats are perceived under different aspects relevant to each stage of the temporal unfolding of a distinct activity. For example, the position of a pin put on a dress under preparation may be perceived *as* part of the proposal for the location to sew, prospectively relating to the upcoming development of the current interaction, or *as* marking the decision, retrospectively relating to its past development (Nevile’s paper). The sentential format with a blank part on the board may be perceived *as* an incomplete sentence to be prospectively completed by students, or *as* a complete format that retrospectively sums up the point of the lesson being finished (Hazel & Mortensen’s paper).

When Garfinkel (1967) noted the role of temporality, among others, for the accomplishment of common understanding, he appears to have addressed grasping various aspects of pieces of talk in interaction that are relevant to the temporal development of conversation.

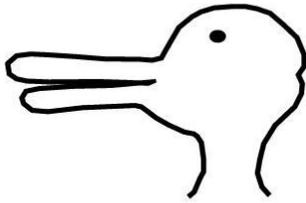
The events that were talked about were specifically vague. Not only do they not frame a clearly restricted set of possible determinations but the depicted events include as their essentially intended and sanctioned features an accompanying “fringe” of determinations that are open with respect to internal relationships, relationships to other events, and *relationships to retrospective and prospective possibilities* (pp. 40-41, emphasis added).

The meaning of each piece of talk must be achieved contingently in the unfolding development of conversation.

Aspects also emerge in spatial, as well as temporal, arrangements of the things in question and bodies in certain settings. For example, when one, entering a particular setting, say, a shoe repair shop, holds shoes with one's hands, instead of wearing them on one's feet, the shoes are perceived under the aspect of needing repair, deprived of their ordinary use (Heinemann & Fox's paper). When forklifts in a setting with materials to be transferred are positioned in a specific manner relative to the materials, they are perceived under the aspect of being ready for moving in a particular direction (or being "warnable") (Nevile & Wagner's paper). When coffee cups, with coffee in them, are positioned at certain locations on the counter, they are perceived under the aspect of being ready for customers who ordered coffee (DeStefani's paper). A mirror held by an assistant close to a hairdresser working on a customer's hair at a certain sequential position is perceived and treated under the aspect of being ready for use by the hairdresser (Horlacher's paper).

Artifacts, certain types of sensory things, may be detached from contexts of their use and become objects of inspection in a specific way. The structural features of an injector that usually stay in the background come to the foreground, as focuses, in the activity of instructing how to use it (Monzoni, Sharrack & Reuber's paper). Olfactory features, artificially separated from other features, come to the foreground as focuses to be coded in quality control of coffee production (Fele's paper). Such changes of the constellation of the foreground and background (or "figure" and "ground") are also features of aspect-perceptions.

As Wittgenstein (1953) observed, seeing an aspect is not any type of interpretation; rather, it is a direct vision. For example, Wittgenstein (1953) argued, regarding seeing-as, that "[w]hen we interpret we form hypotheses, which may prove false. — 'I am seeing this figure as a ....' can be verified as little as (or in the same sense as) 'I am seeing bright red'" (p. 212). When one sees a duck-rabbit picture, for example, one does *not* first have a specific visual experience of the figure and then interpret it in a certain way, that is, as a duck or rabbit (see Wittgenstein, 1953, pp. 193-194). Rather, one cannot see a duck-rabbit picture without seeing it under the aspect of a duck or rabbit. One sees an aspect directly, and one's grasping of an aspect is also exhibited in performing a distinct activity in the temporal and spatial extension, rather than is a hidden mental or nervous process. The studies in this volume demonstrated organizations of aspect-grasping publicly accessible in interaction.



Picture 1: Duck-Rabbit

## Spatial things

Sensory things that are also spatial things are located at the depth in which we live.

Merleau-Ponty (1964) argued that one cannot call such depth the “third dimension.”

First, if it [depth] is a dimension, it would rather be the first one; there would be no certain forms nor planes unless I could define at what distance from me their different parts are found. However, such a first dimension that contains all the other dimensions is not one dimension. . . . Depth, as conceived this way, is rather the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, the experience of a global “locality” where everything is there, from which height, largeness, and distance are only abstracted, or *the experience of the voluminosity which means precisely that there is a thing* (p. 65, emphasis added).

The space in which we encounter things is not abstractly defined as the extension along three axes perpendicular to each other. One way to conceive of the “experience of the voluminosity” where we encounter things may be to consider our lived space as a temporal configuration of publicly displayed orientations, publicly displayed differentially in various body postures, body movements, gaze directions, touch, talk, and the like.

As Schefflen (1973) and Kendon (1990) observed, human bodies are hierarchically structured in terms of the order of strength and acuteness of displayed orientations. The eyes display the acutest orientation; the face and the index finger also display a strong acute orientation. The front of the upper body may display a weaker orientation; the front of the waist displays a weaker, but the most basic orientation, and the like, although this order is cancellable depending on the current context (e.g., when one sits in front of a loudspeaker system with one’s back toward it and one’s eyes closed, a stronger orientation is displayed on one’s back than on one’s front). Each posture embodies a distribution of such differentially displayed orientations relevant to the current activity (see Schegloff, 1998). Touching a thing with one’s hand also displays a strong orientation toward the thing. Moving may display an orientation in the direction

of the movement. We encounter various things under various aspects in temporal configurations of such orientations. One simple example may be a case in point.

The example is excerpted from an interaction between a professional therapist, who is also a university professor, and her student at a Sand Play Therapy session. Sand Play Therapy is a type of psychotherapy based on Jungian psychoanalysis. Clients create a miniature scene with sand in a box and various miniature toys (such as trees, houses, and animals). According to the theory, touching the sand in the box artificially induces a regression and invites clients to discover their egos that were concealed from themselves. The therapist in the example told me that this type of therapy also applied to ordinary persons who did not have any particular complaints; it would be an opportunity for them to reflect on their egos. As the example begins, the student finished a miniature scene in the sand box.

Transcript 1 (TH: Therapist; ST: Student Client)<sup>1</sup>

- 01 TH: momotani san wa kore wa: doko na no ka rina?  
PN Ms P this P where JD IR  
**Ms. Momotani, what place is this?**
- 02 ST: L(eh<)  
**Well**
- 03 ST: momotani san wa r(mo(h)o) h r h hehh hHAHH =  
PN Ms P already  
**Ms. Momotani has already ((done))**
- 04 TH: L a ja nai L sano sa(h)n da  
oh JD NG PN Ms JD  
**Oh, no. ((It's)) Ms Sano.**
- 05 ST: = HAH [H heh heh .hhh
- 06 TH: L sano san gome n e  
PN Ms sorry  
**Ms. Sano, sorry.**
- 07 ST: h r hh
- 08 TH: L sano sa:n wa=  
**Ms Sano,**
- 09 ST: = n n  
**Yeah.**
- 10 TH: n : : r n  
**Yeah.**
- 11 ST: L iya n antona ku:  
well without.any.particular.reason
- 12 TH: n r n  
**Mhm**
- 13 ST: L umi toyuuyori wa yama kankee:: ga  
sea rather.than P mountain related P
- 14 tsukuri tai na:: . . .  
make want P
- Well, I felt just like making something related to  
the mountains rather than the sea. [Lines 11 & 13-14]**

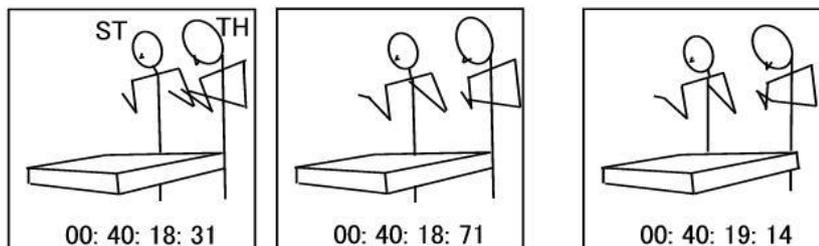
By looking at only the verbal transcript with vocal features, we can find a clear sequential structure. In line 01, TH requests ST to explain what ST intended the scene to

be. This understanding is displayed by ST's turn in lines 11 and 13-14, where ST provides such an explanation, that is, the explanation of what she "felt like making." What occurs between these turns is also clear. In lines 02-03, ST initiates a correction sequence, indicating that the name that TH mentioned in line 01 is incorrect. In line 04, precisely when it becomes evident that the name is not ST's name (i.e., when ST repeats the name together with a honorific [*san*], unusable for one's own name, and the contrastive-case marker [*wa*]), TH begins the correction. In line 06, TH completes the correction sequence with an apology, after which TH initiates the re-doing of the request that she attempted in line 01, using the same format "name-*san-wa*" as used in line 01 (line 08). Precisely at the moment when it is recognizable that the re-doing of the request is now underway (Jefferson, 1973), ST begins the requested explanation (line 09). One may note that when ST initiates the correction, she laughs (lines 03 and 05). This is intelligible as "trouble resistance" (Jefferson, 1984), mitigating the seriousness of TH's mistake, given that mistaking others' names is potentially offensive because it implies a lack of adequate attentiveness to others.

Although the sequence-organizational structure of the example is described in this fashion, the description still glosses over some interactional features. For example, why and how is the request for an explanation in line 01 intelligible as addressed to the particular student named Sano, not the one named Momotani, and concerned with the particular miniature scene that student created? Why and how does ST's laughter increase in volume from lines 03 through 05? Why and how does TH complete the correction sequence and initiate the re-doing of the request for an explanation in that way?

A look at the temporal and spatial arrangement of bodies provides the answers to these questions. Transcript 2 reproduces line 01.

Transcript 2



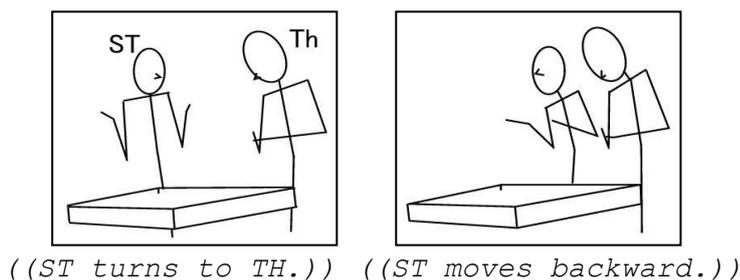
((TH looks at her fingers.)) ((TH looks at the sand box.)) ((TH looks at her fingers.))

01 TH: momotani san wa kore wa: doko nano ka na?
   
PN Ms P this P where JD IR
   
**Ms. Momotani, what place is this?**

The request for an explanation is produced when ST moves forward to the sand box, that is, when ST's movement shows her orientation toward the sand box. At the beginning of line 01, both participants' postures display their orientation toward the sand box. Their upper bodies are oriented to the sand box, and ST looks at the sand box, although TH looks at her fingers. The request is produced when their basic embodied orientations are toward the sand box and are mutually available in their peripheral vision. This arrangement of their bodies and the sand box enables the common understanding that the request is addressed to ST and refers to the sand box in front of them. Furthermore, TH, otherwise looking at her fingers, looks momentarily at the sand box precisely when she utters *kore* 'this,' thereby prominently indicating that the proximal demonstrative refers to the sand box.

Transcript 3 reproduces lines 03-04, where ST initiates the correction sequence.

### Transcript 3



03 ST:    momotani san wa    ɾ(mo(h)o)    hɾh hehh hHAHH =  
           PN        Ms    P        already

**Ms. Momotani has already ((done))**

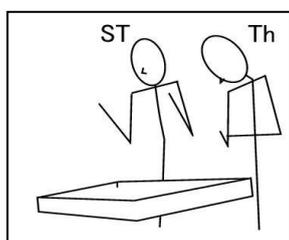
04 TH:                    ʌa ja nai\_    ʌsano sa(h)n da  
                               oh JD    NG        PN    Ms        JD  
                               **Oh, no.            ((It's)) Ms Sano.**

During line 03, when ST initiates the correction sequence, she turns her entire body (including the lower part of her body) toward TH, the source of the error to be rectified. Certainly, TH continues displaying her basic orientation toward the sand box. However, ST's movement changes entire configurations of the embodied orientations, each of which is differentially constitutive of a distinct activity. Then, ST moves back to a location behind TH while increasing the volume of her laughter. The direction of ST's movement displays her detachment from the sand box. Her moving out of their common orientations breaks their interactional framework, thereby marking the end of the particular configuration of embodied orientations for the correction sequence. The laughter is employed as an account for this moving-back movement. She returns toward the sand box during TH's apology during line 06, as shown in Transcript 4.

### Transcript 4

05 ST:    = HAH H heh heh .hhh  
 06 TH:                    ʌsano san gomeɹnɛ  
                               PN    Ms        sorry  
                               **Ms. Sano, sorry.**

↑  
 ((ST moves forward.))



When the bodies are arranged such that both participants' common orientation to the sand box is mutually established once again, TH initiates the re-doing of the request for an explanation. One should also note that during the correction sequence, the distributions of ST's embodied orientations continuously change; this continuous change embodies the temporariness of each distribution and, through it, the tentativeness of the correction sequence. Thus, all pieces of talk and embodied conduct are mutually dependent within the totality of temporally configured embodied orientations. They constitute, and are constituted as parts of, the ongoing activity within this totality of embodied orientations. In each configuration of embodied orientations, a thing (the sand box) is organized as a focus of the current interaction or as part of the unfocused framework for a subsidiary sequence being organized as specifically subsidiary.

It may be interesting to note that prominent modern technology, the telephone, creates a special (virtual) space experience, where one hears the other's voice oriented toward oneself. This fact indicates that our spatial experience does not have to be based on the visual, kinesthetic, or proprioceptive experience. It can rather be constituted by temporally configured orientations of any modalities. The summons-answer sequence in telephone opening sections serves as a device for establishing such configurations of orientations (see Schegloff, 1968). Technological devices for telecommunication, including those for video meetings, can be part of such unfocused framework, or an "ineffable" foundation, for all activities and aspect-perceptions within a special spatial experience (Nielsen's paper).

### For further investigation

A series of work by Charles Goodwin (2000, 2003a, etc.) presented such a holistic view of interaction as demonstrated in the preceding section. In particular, his studies of interaction with an aphasic person who is able to produce only three small conversational objects (*yes*, *no* and *and*) demonstrate that the emergent meanings of these objects are organized through their juxtaposition with various modalities of resources in the temporal unfolding of interaction (Goodwin, 1995, 2003b, etc.). These emergent meanings are another example of aspects (see Verdi, 2010, pp. 131-133 for a discussion of Goodwin's work on aphasia in relation to aspect-perception). The chapters of this volume contribute to the further elucidation of organizations of such emergent meanings of various objects in interaction.

In relation to aspect-perception, Wittgenstein (1953, p. 216) asks the following

question: “Given the two ideas ‘fat’ and ‘lean,’ would you be rather inclined to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or *vice versa*? (I incline decisively towards the former.) Now have ‘fat’ and ‘lean’ some different meaning here from their usual one?” He also observes the following experience: “I feel as if the name ‘Schubert’ fitted Schubert’s works and Schubert’s face” (p. 215). He appeared to begin to depict the complex conceptual geography of our experiences with various aspects. Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]) observed that “the senses communicate among themselves” (p. 238). For example, “[w]e see the rigidity and fragility of the glass and, when it breaks with a crystal-clear sound, this sound is borne by the visible glass” and so on (p. 238). Such “inter-sensory” experiences are also a type of aspect-perception. After this volume, systematic elucidations of interactional organizations of such complex aspect-perceptions in temporal configurations of embodied orientations remain as a task for interaction studies.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> In this transcript, each line is composed of two or three tiers. In the first, there is a Romanized version of the original Japanese. In the second tier, there are phrase-by-phrase glosses, where necessary. Finally, in the third tier, a rough English translation is provided. The first tier of the transcript utilizes Jefferson’s (2004) transcription system. In the second tier, the following abbreviations are used: IR for “Interrogative,” JD for “Judgmental,” P for “Particle,” and PN for “Proper Name.”

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