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Preparing to talk in workplace break interaction: Withdrawing a coffee cup from the lips as a prebeginning[1]

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English abstract
During breaks from work, colleagues often have conversations over a cup of coffee or tea in designated break rooms. Drawing on conversation analysis, this paper investigates such casual interactions, focusing on the coordination of drinking with verbal contributions to ongoing conversation. More specifically, the paper analyses instances in which a participant suspends drinking by withdrawing a cup from their lips and instead produces a self-selected verbal turn. In the process, the withdrawing of the cup comes to form a multimodal prebeginning of that turn. The turns analysed here are verbal requests for confirmation or information. In these moments, participants orient and contribute to the progressivity of interaction and re-consider the distribution of their resources between talking and drinking.

Keywords: break-taking – prebeginning – conversation analysis – suspension – objects in interaction.

German abstract
In Arbeitspausen unterhalten sich Kollegen oft bei einer Tasse Kaffee oder Tee in dafür vorgesehenen Pausenräumen. In diesem Beitrag werden solche informellen Interaktionen konversationsanalytisch untersucht, wobei der Schwerpunkt der Analyse auf der Koordinierung des Trinkens mit verbalen Beiträgen zum laufenden Gespräch liegt. Es werden die Fälle genauer analysiert, in denen ein Teilnehmer das Trinken unterbricht, indem er die Tasse von den Lippen nimmt und stattdessen einen Beitrag äußert. Dabei bildet das Zurückziehen des Bechers ein multimodales Prebeginning zu diesem Turn. Bei den untersuchten Beiträgen handelt es sich *requests for confirmation* oder *information*. In diesen Momenten orientieren sich die Teilnehmer am Gesprächsverlauf und tragen zu ihm bei, indem sie die Aufteilung ihrer Ressourcen zwischen Reden und Trinken neu bewerten.

Keywords: Arbeitspause – *prebeginning* – *conversation analysis* – Aufschub – Objekte in der Interaktion.

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1. Introduction

Break-taking is a regular part of the working day to many, and it often involves interacting with colleagues while having a cup of tea or coffee in a designated break facility. Breaks provide an intermission from work, as well as a potential chance to socialise and get to know co-workers on a more informal level. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of studying break-taking from the perspective of social interaction and the way in which it is organised and managed by participants. It has been shown that participants treat break-time encounters as routinised and expected, display a familiarity towards other participants, and skilfully manage the different activities relating to break-taking, such as having lunch or snacks, reading a paper, looking at their phones, making coffee or tea together, and washing the dishes (Helisten/Siromaa 2022). Further, Siitonen and Siromaa (2021) found that leaving the break room is an activity during which participants adjust their actions to the current interactional situation and orient to co-presence and social solidarity. On the other hand, in opening and closing virtual break encounters, participants often wave their hand to establish and manage social co-presence, and to make their arrival and departure (or their orientation to those of others) visible (Siitonen et al. 2022). Furthermore, taking shared remote breaks from work on a virtual platform (such as Zoom or Skype) facilitates co-presence, togetherness and social intimacy in situations that do not allow face-to-face meetings, for example (Holmström et al. 2022). Such studies highlight the significance of casual interaction at the workplace and show that break-taking is a social phenomenon where the material environment also plays an important part.

As both coffee and conversation seem to play a central role in shared break-taking, workplace breaks provide a fruitful setting for exploring how people fit together their involvement in talking and drinking. Coffee may, in part, be an 'alibi' for engaging in social interaction (see Laurier 2008:171), and break-takers may be, in certain ways, expected to be social and engage in conversation, but also to drink their hot beverages before they get cold, which makes both talking and drinking relevant and timely during a break. However, in general, talking and drinking cannot physically be advanced simultaneously because they require the use of the same resources (i.e., the mouth). This paper looks at how participants manage such situations and coordinate their drinking actions with verbal contributions to ongoing talk.

The data was recorded in the break rooms of relatively established work communities in Finland during the community members' breaks from work. In these

occasions, participants engage in, among other break-relevant involvements, talking and drinking. For this study, all instances in which a participant suspends drinking to produce a verbal turn-at-talk were collected. Most of such suspensions of drinking appear in connection to responsive actions. However, the focus here is on sequence-initiating actions in which the suspension foreshadows self-selection to speak next. More specifically, in the cases examined in this paper, a participant suspends ongoing drinking by withdrawing the cup from their lips and produces a verbal turn, in this way constructing the withdrawal of the cup as a prebeginning to the upcoming turn. What then follows is a request for confirmation or information that relates to ongoing talk and makes relevant a response by the recipient.

The analyses in this paper show how by suspending their drinking in its preparation phase and, instead, producing a sequence-initiating turn, or even evidently hesitating between talking and drinking, participants display their sustained orientation to the ongoing interactional situation as well as to progressing interaction and allocating their resources to that end in situ. In this way, withdrawing a cup makes visible potential shifts in participation framework.

2. Organisation of drinking and talking

Goffman (1966:64) considers drinking as a type of auto-involvement, where a participant is occupied with an activity that directly concerns themself: drinking a beverage occupies the mouth in a way that mostly prevents speaking at the same time. Thus, participants are not usually able to simultaneously drink and talk, but they can be available for conversation in other ways and signal their involvement multimodally. Raymond and Lerner (2014:231) further state that

> [p]articipants can engage in two distinct courses of action concurrently by allocating resources of language and the body between them in situations where the two lines of action do not employ or call upon the same resources – or at least do not do so at the same moment.

Drinking and talking can therefore be considered as being managed in an *embedded order* of multiactivity (Mondada 2014), meaning that participants adjust their actions in situ and allocate their resources to either drinking or talking, based on the current interactional situation. Further, Hoey (2018) notes that when selected to speak next, participants may advance drinking and talking in parallel, for example, with vocalisations or non-verbal responses (e.g., nodding).

The concepts of *suspension* and *resumption* are employed here in examining the organisation of talking and drinking: the cases in this paper show how participants *suspend* drinking, i.e., instead of moving on with it, they put it on hold and initiate an intervening course of action, and *resume* drinking at a later point (see Helisten 2018). As drinking places constraints on talk, suspending drinking by moving one's cup away from one's lips, for example, can indicate a potential upcoming verbal contribution. Cups and other such material resources can, then, be considered "crucial semiotic artifacts" (see Goodwin 2000:1505) that have an impact on interaction. For instance, lifting a coffee cup can indicate that no further talk is coming (Hoey 2018), or drinking up the last bit of coffee can be a part of the ending ritual of a coffee break (see Laurier 2008), thus regulating talking as well as the structure of the social encounter. Drinking is also a way of indicating non-speakership (Hoey

2017), as well as a way of managing lapses by bodily disengaging in an auto-involvement that has a projectable endpoint, for instance if the participants orient to the lapse as problematic (Vatanen 2021).

Indeed, Hoey (2018) found that drinking is an orderly affair, and that participants modulate it with talking in situ, depending on their current engagements and the possibilities that those engagements grant. Drinking can be thought to consist of three phases: 1) the preparation phase, 2) the focal action phase, and 3) the return phase (Hoey 2018; see also Kendon 1980; Sacks/Schegloff 2002; Lerner/Raymond 2021). The *preparation phase* consists of taking the cup and moving it to the mouth, and 'docking' it there; in the *focal action phase*, the participant tilts the cup upward and pours the drink into their mouth; and the *return phase* features the cup being taken away from the mouth and to a home or resting position (Hoey 2018; see also Kendon 1980; Sacks/Schegloff 2002; Lerner/Raymond 2021). In the data examined in this paper, participants suspend drinking either after the preparation phase, or even after they have already begun tilting the cup towards their mouth (i.e., in the first part of the focal action phase). Then, instead of pouring the liquid into their mouth, they move on to the return phase, and allocate their resources to talking. Participants may place the cup on the table or move their hands approximately halfway back to the original home position, which Cibulka (2015) calls a 'provisional home position' (PHP) (for *home position*, see Sacks/Schegloff 2002). The participant is pausing their action for a moment: a move like this keeps the action open and may give indication to co-participants regarding the participant's current involvement in the ongoing interaction (Cibulka 2015). In the case of suspending drinking, the suspension may project a forthcoming shift: either 1) the participant may produce a subsequent verbal action or otherwise display engagement in a verbal activity, or 2) they may abandon that line of action, and for example return to drinking. The suspension of drinking after the preparation phase makes thus visible a potential change in the participation framework: from a non-current speaker about to drink, through suspension of drinking and withdrawal of the cup, to a possible next speaker, and, finally, through the initiation of a verbal turn, to an incipient speaker (see Szymanski 1999; for participation shifts, see Mondada 2007).

The suspension of drinking may thus potentially be considered a resource for organising participation in the so-called *prebeginning* position. That is, as shown in conversation analytic literature, prebeginnings may occur before talk by a potential next speaker, possibly indicating an upcoming next turn (Mondada 2007). Drawing on Schegloff (1996), Lindström (2006) describes prebeginnings as non-linguistic features, such as inhalation, laughter, or nonverbal signals. Moreover, Mortensen (2009) studies speakership and recipiency in classrooms in cases where the next speaker has not been selected, and notes that recipiency is established in the prebeginning position of responsive turns, for instance, through in-breaths and changes in body position. Indeed, previous studies have shown that participants utilise not only vocal resources but also their bodies, the surrounding space and material objects in prebeginnings, and monitor the interactional situation, which allows them to produce their responsive as well as sequence-initiating actions, such as requests, at opportune moments in interaction (see Keisanen/Rauniomaa 2012).

This paper examines how participants carry out the change from completing the preparation phase of drinking to changing their course of action to talking, which

suggests that they continuously (re)allocate and (re)consider their resources regarding these two break-relevant involvements. Moreover, this paper explores how participants carry out drinking in service of social interaction, on one hand, and how they orient to drinking as a part of the ongoing social interaction, on the other. The analysis focuses on sequence-initiating actions in which participants request confirmation or information (see, e.g., Heritage 2012; Stivers/Rossano 2010). In most cases, these requests relate to an ongoing topic, and participants can be seen utilising response mobilising features such as interrogative syntax, gaze, gesture, and recipient-tilted epistemic asymmetry (see Stivers/Rossano 2010; see also Auer 2017). Further, the requests are treated as response relevant by the recipients (see Stivers/Rossano 2010). The final excerpt, however, shows a case where a participant shows drinking advancement and retraction, before moving on with drinking, which suggests that she monitors the unfolding of the conversation and potential opportunities to speak. The excerpt shows that while the moving of a cup up and down potentially projects a verbal turn, it can be identified as a prebeginning only when, or if, a verbal turn is in effect produced. In this sense, the prebeginnings here are analysed retrospectively, taking note of what seems to occasion them as well as the type of turns they precede.

3. Data and method

The data of this study consists of approximately 32 hours of video recordings from break rooms, collected from knowledge work communities in Finland between 2018-2019. The recordings were done prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and thus reflect break-taking habits of a time before a mass move to home offices. In the studied communities, there are no strict rules regarding break-taking, and people are fairly free to determine their break-times. However, breaks are taken regularly (usually in the morning and afternoon[2]), and habits relating to break-taking have formed over a long period of time through common practice. The data was recorded using 1-3 video cameras and, in some cases, a separate audio recorder. The participants have given their informed consent to the use of the data for research purposes. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants in the transcripts and in the analyses. The excerpts presented in the following section are transcribed according to Jefferson (2004) and Mondada (2019), to depict both talk and multimodal conduct. The data is in English and Finnish, and idiomatic translations are provided as relevant. This paper utilises conversation analysis, which allows for the examination of micro-details and the sequential unfolding of interaction (Sidnell 2013; Sacks et al. 1974).

Interactions in break rooms can be focused or unfocused (Helisten/Siromaa 2022; see also Goffman 1966), and the number of people can vary from one person having lunch in the break room to several people engaged in the activity of 'being on a break together', being social and managing break-relevant involvements. The analysis is delimited to instances where there are at least two participants on a break and one of them appears to be going forth with drinking (i.e., they engage in a preparatory phase of drinking, and either lift a cup off the table or move a cup they are

[2] At the time of writing (June 2024), at least some of the studied communities appear to have returned to a similar break schedule.

already holding closer to the mouth). However, this participant does not engage in the focal action phase (as in, take a sip), but instead suspends drinking, and in some cases visibly withdraws the cup away from their lips. In total, there are 115 such cases in the data. Out of these, 94 feature participants postponing or otherwise modifying the trajectory of drinking in responsive turns. The focus of this analysis is on the 21 instances in which a participant has made an upward movement with the cup either from the table or a provisional home position in their hands but then suspends drinking and self-selects to produce a sequence-initiating turn. Additionally, a situation where a participant shows drinking advancement and retraction before moving on with drinking is also analysed in the final excerpt of the paper.

4. Re-allocating resources between talking and drinking in break room conversations

In the cases presented here, the participants mobilise withdrawing of the cup as a multimodal resource to orient to the progressivity of interaction. Further, the excerpts show participants first self-selecting to initiate a verbal sequence (see Sacks et al. 1974), and then selecting a next speaker to respond. The speakers orient to something in ongoing talk, either a single word or multiple turns exchanged previously, to be elaborated on by way of producing a request for confirmation or information – and doing so while the issue is still relevant for the ongoing interaction. What is more, the recipients in these instances also treat the requests as response relevant.

The following analysis is divided so that subsection 4.1. presents cases where participants suspend drinking and resume it after a brief hold. It is notable that in these cases, the participants suspend drinking to make a request that the recipient has personal access to. Subsection 4.2., then, includes cases where participants suspend drinking and then resume it at a later point in the interaction. In these cases, participants make requests about matters of a more general nature, that also relate to the ongoing interaction. Finally, the last subsection (4.3.) presents a case where a participant advances and retracts drinking actions, and in the end, moves forward with drinking.

4.1. Suspending drinking and resuming it after a brief hold

In excerpt 1 there are six people sitting in the break room, and the conversation has schismed (see Egbert 1997) so that two participants, Matthew and Jim, who are facing each other, have been talking about bikes in English. The other four participants are engaged in a conversation in Finnish.

Excerpt (1): ((Break_data. "How much was yours"))

01 MAT: and they are really great. they help you ( )
>>gz jim-->
jim >>holds cup in PHP-->
jim >>gz mat-->>
02 JIM: I know but they that was a really [( )
03 MAT: [well it 's four
jim --> closer to
lips-->
04 MAT: thousand euros.
05 (0.4) (.)
jim --> withdraws from lips-->
06 JIM: oh and how much was you#rs? going (th †ou[sand?)]
fig #1
mat --> †gz to r.-->
07 MAT: [a: h]
jim --> to lips-->
08 (0.6) †(0.2)
mat --> †closes eyes-->
09 MAT: t wo thousan: d (1.0) I think altogether
jim -> drinks----- withdraws to PHP-->>

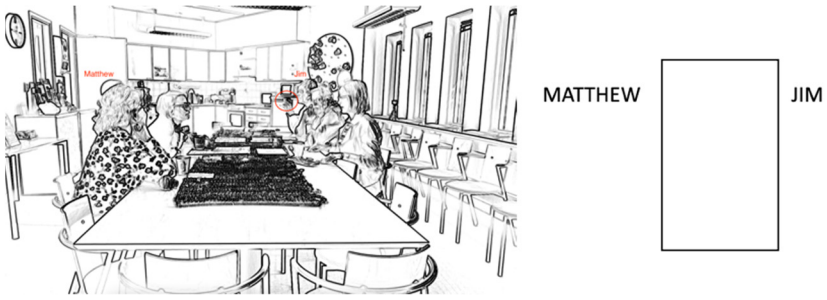

Figure 1

Jim is actively engaged in both drinking and talking with Matthew, and throughout the excerpt his gaze seems to be fixed on Matthew. Further, Jim is holding his cup in a provisional home position off the table, approximately 3-10 centimetres from his lips, which allows him to drink at a moment's notice. On line 1, Matthew produces a turn assessing the model of bikes they have been discussing, *and they are really great*, and Jim concedes and begins to provide a contrasting view on line 2. Overlapping with the end of Jim's turn, Matthew brings up the price of the bikes, *it's four thousand euros* (l.3-4). During Matthew's turn, Jim moves his cup closer to his mouth into the docking position but does not drink right away: Jim is continuously looking at Matthew and thus visibly monitoring the unfolding of Matthew's turn. Matthew finishes his turn (l.4), and a gap ensues on line 5. During the gap, Jim, instead of drinking, withdraws the cup from his lips, and then makes a request for more information (*oh and how much was yours,* l.6). Jim's drinking reversal can here be considered a means to minimise the gap, as well as a way to resolve the overlap initiated by Matthew. Jim may also have anticipated that Matthew's turn on lines 3-4 would be longer. However, as Matthew's turn is rather short, Jim orients to the gap as a transition relevance place and takes the opportunity to make a

request for further information. Jim's request also forecloses the possibility of moving on to another topic for the time being. Based on the limited view available in the video data on Matthew's gaze conduct, Matthew seems to look at Jim, and he is smiling when Jim withdraws his cup. Jim's withdrawal of the cup constitutes here a prebeginning as it is immediately followed by a verbal turn (l.6), and so, as the withdrawal may be visible to Matthew, it foreshadows that something else than drinking from the cup may follow.

By lowering his cup away from his lips, Jim displays an orientation to becoming a possible next speaker, which reflects a potential shift in the current participation framework. The following request for information reflexively constitutes the price of bikes as an item to be elaborated on at that moment. In the beginning of Jim's request, the discourse marker *oh* signals the receipt of new information or a surprising turn of events (Heritage 2018), and the connective element *and* connects the request it prefaces to previous talk (see Heritage/Sorjonen 1994). Jim's request for information is formatted as a wh-question, it features recipient-tilted epistemic asymmetry, and it ends with a rising intonation, i.e. interrogative prosody, which are all features that elicit a response (see Stivers/Rossano 2010). Indeed, Matthew treats Jim's request as response relevant and begins his response on line 7. During Matthew's response, Jim again moves his cup close to his mouth, and then drinks on line 9 (3 seconds after completing the preparatory phase of drinking on l.3). Jim resumes drinking relatively fast after making the request, which may be related to the content of the request: Matthew can be expected to have access to the price of the bike and thus be able to provide an answer unproblematically, without further elaboration on the question from Jim. This allows Jim to drink while Matthew answers.

In excerpt 1, Jim was seen monitoring the unfolding of the sequence closely by gazing at Matthew, while also talking and drinking. Jim's continuous monitoring can also be seen in how he suspended drinking to make a request for information at an opportune moment, and thus also progressed the conversation instead of drinking. The prebeginning to Jim's request, i.e., the suspension of drinking, was visually available to Matthew, and so could be seen to foreshadow a re-allocation of resources to something else than drinking. In then producing a request for information from Matthew, Jim secured time for taking a sip of his drink while Matthew answered.

In excerpt 2, there are four people in the break room, and the topic has first been discussed by Mira and Noora, but in the excerpt shown here, Laura and Taru are the two main participants discussing how many boxes are needed to pack up an office room.

Excerpt (2): ((Break_data: "So you packed already"))

Figure 2

01 TAR: yks on tyhjiä mappeja.
one is empty binders
>>gz at lau-->
lau >>gz at tar-->
02 (0.9)
03 LAU: aijaa?
oh okay
04 (2.0)
05 LAU: no en kai mäkään s : [it t]ar : vi e[nemp : ää. i he he] i he
well I guess I won't need more either then
tar --> : gl. down : gl. lau-- : gz down-->
lau --> i gl. l. i gz cup
-->
06 TAR: [(mut)]. [.nii ..he he he.]
(but) yeah
07 (0.4) i (0.3) (0.9)
lau i gz tar-->
lifts from armrest tw. lips-->
08 TAR: ett i ä.
so that
lau i gl. cup-->
09 (0.6) i (0.2) (.) (.)
lau --> i gz tar-->>
lau --> touches lips withdraws-->
10 LAU: siis sä (.) : (.) pakkasi#t j : o.
so you packed already
tar --> : gz lau--------- : gz down-->>
fig #2
11 (0.4) (0.2)
lau moves to lips-->
12 TAR: joo (0.1) (0.2) aika lail la.
yeah pretty much
lau --> drinks

On line 1, Taru is finishing her telling to Laura about how many boxes she has for packing up her office for an upcoming move. After a 0.9-second gap (l.2), Laura first offers a neutral response, *aijaa* ('oh okay' l.3; see Koivisto 2015), and after a gap (l.4), she further states *no en kai mäkään sit tarvi enempää* ('well I guess I won't need more either then' l.5). Laura and Taru then laugh together, presumably at how

few items they need to pack (l.5-6). The topic seems to come to a possible close, and during a lapse (l.7), Laura gazes at Taru, and begins lifting her cup from the sofa's armrest towards her lips. Then, Taru makes a reference to prior talk by producing a stand-alone *että* ('so that', l.8), which is here interpreted as a prompt that invokes prior talk, making it possible and potentially relevant for Laura to make her own conclusions regarding the number of boxes (for work on turn-final *että,* see Koivisto 2011; for work on turn-final *so*, see Raymond 2004). Laura shortly glances at her cup during Taru's turn on line 8. During her turn, Taru is already gazing down at the cup of yoghurt that she is holding in her left hand. Another lapse ensues on line 9, during which Laura returns her gaze to Taru, and her cup touches her lips, but she then immediately withdraws the cup a few centimetres from her lips, and the withdrawal can be seen to form a prebeginning to the subsequent request for confirmation on line 10. Laura had been gazing at Taru already (from line 9), and directs her request to Taru primarily by indicating an epistemic asymmetry between them and asking Taru about her activities, as well as by using the second-person singular pronoun *sä* ('you', l.10). What is more, Laura's turn is prefaced with the discourse marker *siis* ('so'), which can here be understood as projecting what follows as Laura's interpretation of Taru's telling, as well as a summary of previous talk (see Sorjonen 2018). Taru lifts her gaze from the cup of yoghurt to Laura during the request for confirmation and, indeed, provides a confirming response on line 12 (see e.g., Sorjonen 2001).

During the gap that follows her request (l.11), Laura starts moving the cup back to her lips, and drinks when Taru responds on line 12. Laura's request for confirmation relates to the current topic, but concerns only Taru, who has epistemic access to the matter. Laura is gazing at Taru and monitoring her conduct as, at this point, they are the primary participants in the conversation. By suspending drinking on line 9, Laura not only minimises a lapse in their conversation, but also takes the opportunity to make an interactional move that is currently relevant but might not be so later, thus foreclosing the possibility of another topic. Further, by producing a response-relevant request for confirmation, Laura makes room for herself to drink, and indeed, drinks during Taru's response (l.12). Similarly to excerpt 1, excerpt 2 presented a situation where a participant requested confirmation on a matter that only the recipient had access to, as it related to Taru's personal packing project. Laura's request was foreshadowed by a prebeginning in the form of a withdrawn cup. Contrary to excerpt 1, in excerpt 2, the other participants (Mira and Noora) were not verbally engaged in the conversation or an exchange of their own but aligned as listeners to Taru and Laura's exchange.

The two excerpts in this section have highlighted instances where a participant suspended ongoing drinking to make a request for more information or confirmation. In these cases, a brief hold followed the suspension, and the participants resumed drinking relatively fast after the initial suspension. A quick resumption was at least partly made possible by the nature of the requests: the first one dealt with the price of the recipient's bike, and the second one related to the status of the recipient's packing project. That is, the requests in these two excerpts deal with information that the recipients have sole or at least primary access to and that therefore seem to invite fairly uncomplicated answers. Further, as the participants withdrew their cups only a short distance from their lips as they made their requests, they

were able to resume drinking after a brief hold, as soon as the recipients began to respond.

4.2. Suspending drinking and resuming it later in the interaction

In the following excerpt, Richard and Lilly are sitting together in the break room and talking about the research project for which data is currently being collected at their workplace. The project team's cameras are in the break room. A moment before the extract, the participants have addressed one of the cameras and stated that they would like to hear what happens after the project is finished.

Excerpt (3): ((Break_data: "Has it been done before or"))

```
01 LIL: mhm and [have] fun ty          hping this al     9 h(.) out
   ric  >>gz away from lil---          hgz lil-------      hgz away from lil-->
   lil  >>gz left-------------------------                 9gz ric-->
   ric  >>holds cup in PHP-->
02 RIC:         [yeah]
03      (0.4)
04 RIC: oh yeah. ha   h          9a
              -->   brings close to lips-->
   lil          -->                 9gz down-->
05      (1.1)   (0.2)
   ric    -->   withdraws from lips to PHP->
06 RIC: thi       h#s? (0.2)      h(0.2) pretty much new.
        -->       hgz lil---      hgz away from lil-->
   fig     #3
07      (0.7)
08      has it be          9e hn done
   lil       -->           9gz ric-->
                              hgz lil-->
09 RIC: befo:re or (°do y            9ou think so°)?
   lil            -->                 9gz table-->
10      (0.3)
11 LIL: this k          9nd of research?
           -->          9gz ric-->
12 RIC: ye+ah.+
          +nods+
13 LIL: m       9hm I don't know. (.) I mean? (1.0) it's int-
        ->      9gz l.-->
14 RIC: not in ((pla   c          9e))or [(        )].
                            -->   brings to lips-->
   lil          -->               9gz ric-->
15 LIL:                  [not      ]here yeah.
16 RIC: yeah.
17 LIL: not here b            h ut u9n.
   ric         -->           hgz away from lil-->>
               -->   drinks-->>
                 -->           9turns head to l.-->>
```

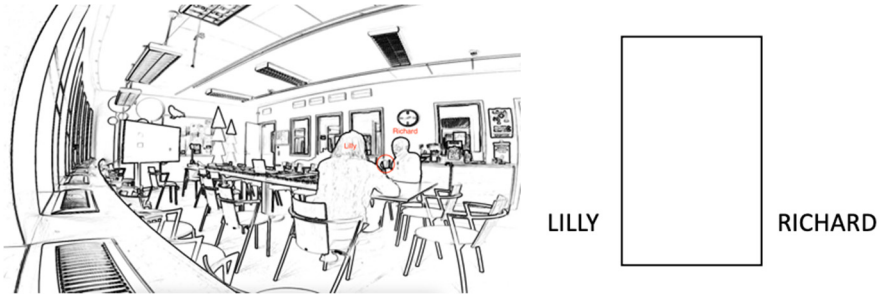

Figure 3

On line 1, Lilly wishes the researchers a good time in transcribing the data. During Lilly's turn, Richard holds his cup in a provisional home position, a few centimetres from his lips, and first briefly gazes toward Lilly and then turns his gaze away (l.1). From the beginning of the excerpt, Lilly, in turn, gazes somewhere to her left, potentially at the camera or the documents on the table. At the end of her turn, she turns her gaze toward Richard. Richard's *oh yeah* and subsequent laughter particles (l.4) suggest that he treats Lilly's turn as providing new information (for *oh,* see Heritage 2018), about the research project in which they are partaking and the potentially complex task of transcription. Towards the end of Richard's turn, Lilly shifts her gaze from Richard somewhere down in front of her. With this, the sequence of addressing the camera comes to a potential close. Indeed, while Richard has, up to this point, been holding the cup in a provisional home position, as he now produces the second laughter particle, he moves on to the preparatory phase of drinking by bringing the cup closer to his lips and gazes down (line 4). A lapse follows Richard's turn (l.5), and Richard is still looking away from Lilly. During the lapse, Richard withdraws the cup from the docking position, and he then produces a verbal turn, which incrementally evolves into a request for information. At the beginning and towards the end of his turn (l.6, l.8), Richard gazes at Lilly, and Lilly seems to lift her gaze to Richard at the end of line 8. Due to the camera angle, it is not possible to ascertain the direction of Lilly's gaze during Richard's cup withdrawal; however, her torso and head are oriented to Richard's direction.

Here also the withdrawal of the cup from the docking position and away from the participant's mouth can retrospectively be seen as a prebeginning that foreshadows a verbal turn. The fragmented request begins with a reference to the research project, a try-marked *this?*, and its novelty, *pretty much new* (l.6). Lilly does not respond, and a gap ensues (0.7 seconds; l.7). Then, in the lack of an uptake or a display of recognition of the referent, Richard reformulates his request for information, providing Lilly with alternatives, *has it been done before or (do you think so),* on lines 8 and 9. In this way, Richard places Lilly in an expert position, with *or* and the following *do you think so* softening and indicating uncertainty regarding the request (see e.g., Drake 2015). Topically, Richard's request seems to be prompted by what they were previously talking about; however, it shifts the focus slightly and initiates a new sequence. After a short gap (0.3 seconds, l.10) Lilly initiates repair (l.11) in an insert sequence (see Schegloff 2007; Stivers 2013) to clarify the referent*,* which Richard confirms on line 12. Then, on line 13, Lilly provides a non-answer response, *I don't know*, to Richard's queries.

With his turn on line 6, Richard orients to talk as the relevant next action, and suspends the ongoing drinking in favour of producing a verbal turn. At this point in

the conversation, Richard's request may also be a way to minimise lapses and to set up space for a longer, more elaborate response. Richard resumes drinking 14 seconds after the start of the suspension (l.17), when they seem to have reached a consensus about the matter. This shows that Richard monitors the interactional situation and drinks only when the topic comes to a possible close. Excerpt 3 showcased an interactional situation where only two participants were present in the break room, and a topic appeared to be ending but was reopened with a request for information. The query that invited more talk on a related topic was preceded by a prebeginning in the form of a withdrawal of a cup from the lips.

In excerpt 4, a group of seven people is engaged in the shared activity of identifying names for traditional Finnish tools. Viljo, one of the participants, is the first one to read out loud a definition for *petkel* ('bark spud') in a dictionary. Emma, along with others, aligns as a recipient of the reading.

Excerpt (4): ((Break_data. "Did it read mortar"))

Figure 4

01 VIL: oljet hakattiin luuvassa petkeleellä silpuiksi.
straws were beaten to shreds with a bark spud
>>looks at dictionary-->
emm >>gz. in vil's direction, eyes wondering-->
02 (0.4)
03 VIL: kuoria paperipuut petkele) ellä. (.) survoa petkeleellä
to peel trees with a bark spud crush with a pestle
emm -->) gz cup-->
04 VIL: huhmares.
mortar
05 (.) (.)
emm lifts from table to lips-->
06 VEE: siis onko se nyt s) iis s e on semmonen (.) -(.) ihan
so is it like so it is like a
vil --> -gz vee-->
emm -->) gz vil-->>
emm --> withdraws-->
07 VEE: yksio sa[inen esine.]
one-piece instrument
emm --> withdraws further to PHP-->>
08 EMM: [lukik siinä huh#ma]res?
did it read mortar there
fig #4
09 (0.4)

10 VEE: et [s -i-
so it
vil --> -gz dictionary-->
11 PIR: [joo ei s -e [semmonen] ei se pulikka.
yeah so not like a sap
vil --> -gz emm-->>
12 VIL: [huhmares.]
mortar
((26 seconds omitted))
31 PIR: t%uoss on t) - uuran kuva. (.)) - ( ) tuo minusta
there's a picture of an ice chisel to me that
%shows phone to others-->>
emm --> lifts from table------- drinks-->>
emm -->) gz vil----------) gz cup-->>
vil --> -gz dictionary--- -gz phone-->>

During Viljo's reading of the dictionary definition (l.1-4), Emma has her cup on the table in front of her. Once Viljo has finished reading but is still looking at the dictionary, Emma grabs hold of her cup, lifts it up to her lips and tilts it slightly (l.5); that is, she completes the preparation phase and is about to move on to the focal action phase of drinking. However, during Veera's following turn, which is also a request for confirmation but addressed to Pirkko (l.6-7), Emma instead withdraws the cup from her lips to a provisional home position, approximately halfway between her lips and the table. The withdrawal constitutes a prebeginning as Emma continues to produce an interrogatively designed request for confirmation, *lukik siinä huhmares* ('did it read mortar there', l.8). The request for confirmation demarcates the last word in the definition, *huhmares,* as an item to be elaborated on and, in a way, challenges the reading of it. Emma directs the request to Viljo through gaze and through referring to the dictionary entry (*siinä* lit. 'in it', l.8). Emma thus orients to Viljo as the one who has access to the dictionary and who is therefore in the best position to respond.

During the prebeginning of Emma's request for confirmation, when Emma withdraws the cup from her lips, the other participants are gazing at Veera, who has, a moment before, started talking. After Emma has produced the request for confirmation, Viljo turns his gaze from Veera first to the dictionary, and then to Emma. Looking at Emma, Viljo responds by repeating the word *huhmares* (l.12), which initiates some back-and-forth between Emma and Viljo, to establish shared understanding of the referent (data not shown). During this exchange, Emma refrains from drinking but holds her cup in the provisional home position, as if ready to resume at any moment (see Raymond/Lerner 2014). At the same time, Pirkko, Veera and Sanna are occupied with discussing the properties of another tool (l.10-11), and, based on his moving gaze, Marko follows both lines of conversation, but he does not contribute to either verbally. This suggests that the spelling of *huhmares* is mainly of interest to Emma. After the issue of *huhmares* has been clarified, Emma first puts the cup on the table but then lifts it off the table, brings it to her lips and drinks the last bit of coffee (l.31: 30 seconds after first completing the preparation phase at l.5) when the other participants have moved on topic-wise. Emma's drinking includes that 'extra tilt' (Laurier 2008), which makes the last sip visible to others, and soon after, Emma gathers her things and leaves the break room. Emma's request for confirmation can here be considered a side sequence (Jefferson 1972): while it

stems from the ongoing reading of definitions, it momentarily stalls this shared activity for Emma and Viljo. Nevertheless, as the request for confirmation concerns the spelling of a word in the dictionary entry just read aloud by Viljo, the matter is relevant now, not necessarily later. By suspending drinking and producing the request for confirmation instead, Emma treats resolving the issue of the spelling of *huhmares* as urgent.

In excerpt 4, the participants were engaged in a shared activity, but the suspension of drinking coffee and the subsequent request for confirmation created a side sequence between two participants, as one participant (Emma) requested information that another (Viljo) had access to. Prior to her request, Emma withdrew the cup, which she had a moment earlier raised to her lips, to the provisional home position. The withdrawal of the cup, as it was immediately followed by a verbal turn, thus reflexively constituted a prebeginning.

Excerpt 5 again shows seven people sitting in the break room, talking about what kind of a party game to have at a wedding. The idea is to come up with an activity that is characteristically related to the local cultural context in Finland. The participants have a shared focus, and the request for information about the specifics of folding linen invites not only the primary intended recipient but also others to respond.

Excerpt (5): ((Break_data. "But do you fold it or do you roll it, the sheet?"))

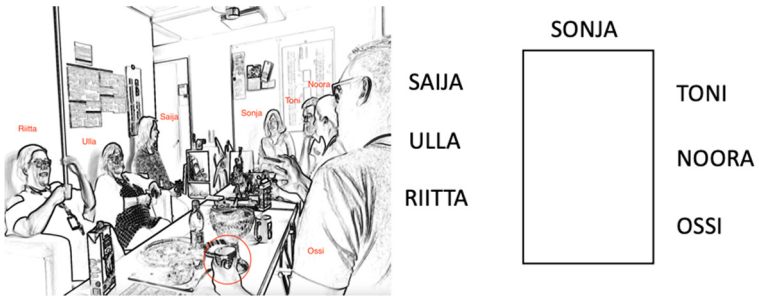

Figure 5

01 RII: mää ehotin sitä lakananviikkausta. (mutta tuota)
I suggested folding linen (but uhm)
02 SON: &mm.
oss &smiles at rii-->
03 RII: aivan (.) (tyrmis[sään])
completely (stunned)
04 SON: [( ]) te& <hdä oikeat taito[kset.
make the correct folds
oss -->&
oss <gz son-->
05 RII: [niin kos ' ka se on
yeah because it's a
--> ' gz tw. son-->
06 RII: pe < ris <uomalain en kyky.
very Finnish skill
oss --> <gz cup <gz rii-->
oss reaches for cup lifts fr. table close to mouth-->

07 ULL: juu[::,] ( ) [lunta]
yeah snow
08 SON: [ja tärkeä] a <vi o <[liito ls][sa.
and important in a marriage
oss --> <gz son <gz rii-->
--> withdraws from lips close to tb.-->
lpoints to rii's dir.-->
09 RII: [ni[i
yeah
10 OSS: [mutta vi ' ika#taanko
but do you fold
fig #5
rii ' gz oss-->>
11 OSS: se v a li rul%lataanko se lakana%.
it or do you roll it the sheet
--> to tb.
--> l %rolling motion w hands%
12 RII: vii:kataan.
you fold it
13 NOO: no ru <lla ' [ta [an.
well you roll it
oss --> <gz noo-->>
rii --> ' gz noo
14 ULL: [no [kato se rullaaminen
you see the rolling
15 RII: [he he he he
((41 seconds omitted))
41 RII: si tte täs sä vaihees sa ko ollaan n äin niin niin sitte
and when you are at this stage then
oss >>holds cup close to face
closer to lips stops-- moves to lips drinks-->>

In the beginning of the excerpt, Riitta reports that she has earlier suggested folding linen as a potential party activity (l.1) and after some aligning turns by Sonja, adds that it is a very Finnish skill (l.5-6). Ossi follows the exchange closely, smiling at Riitta and shifting his gaze between Riitta and Sonja. During Riitta's turn (l.6), Ossi lifts his cup from the table close to his mouth, preparing to drink. However, instead of going forward with drinking, Ossi holds the cup up for a short time in docking position and appears to be shifting his gaze from Riitta to Sonja, and back to Riitta. During Sonja's turn (l.8), Ossi suspends drinking by withdrawing the cup from his lips to a position close to the table, which forms a prebeginning that foreshadows a verbal turn. When Ossi begins the withdrawal, Ulla and Saija are looking in his direction, whereas the rest of the participants (Noora, Toni, Riitta and Sonja) are looking away.

Immediately after the suspension, Ossi gazes and points towards Riitta, a gesture which identifies Riitta as the primary intended recipient. After pointing at Riitta, and towards the end of his turn, Ossi places his coffee cup on the table (l.11), to free his hands to demonstrate a rolling motion. When Ossi produces his turn (l.10-11), all other participants turn their gaze to him. Ossi's request for more information, *mutta viikataanko se vai rullataanko se lakana* ('but do you fold it, or do you roll it, the sheet') can be seen as a topic proffer (see Schegloff 2007). The request has a cultural component to it, as people may have dissenting views on

whether to fold or roll linen based on where they come from, and their answers are likely to reflect these views. Thus, the request invites more elaborate responses, with potential justifications, and thus forecloses the possibility of a new topic being introduced for the time being.

Ossi's turn indicates that it was prompted by ongoing talk about folding linen and it being a very Finnish skill. The turn begins with the conjunction *mutta* ('but'), which here projects a new subtopic that relates to the ongoing overall topic but introduces a slight diversion from it, digging deeper into the specifics of folding linen (see Sorjonen 1989). Ossi poses a two-part alternative question, to which a verb repeat (*viikataan* 'you fold it' or *rullataan* 'you roll it') is the appropriate form of a response. Indeed, Ossi demonstrates knowledge of the variations in folding linen by providing alternatives and seeking further information about where the others stand on the matter. Riitta, whom Ossi has selected as the next speaker through gaze and pointing, takes up the proffer and responds with *viikataan* ('you fold it', l.12). Immediately after Riitta's turn, Noora pitches in with *no rullataan* ('well you roll it', l.13), the two responses now highlighting the two schools of folding linen that Ossi's request for information referred to. In this way, even though Ossi's request is primarily directed at Riitta, it also invites others to express their views on the topic.

Ossi resumes drinking later in the conversation (l.41; 47 seconds after first suspending drinking on l.8), after his topic proffer has been responded to and the matter of folding linen or rolling linen has been discussed at some length. Thus, Ossi's drinking is suspended for some time – and during that time, initiated by his request for information, Ossi contributes to and progresses the ongoing interaction and drinks his coffee only after the topic has been brought to a close. This shows that Ossi is invested in the topic, even after introducing it.

The excerpts in this section have illustrated situations where a participant suspends drinking and resumes it later in the interaction. The participants' requests dealt with a variety of topics: the spelling of the name of a tool, rolling or folding linen, and whether a certain type of research had previously been conducted. In comparison to the cases in subsection 4.1., the topics here deal with matters that are of a more general nature. Such topics, as well as the particular designs of the requests may be reflected in the extended periods of suspension that preceded the resumption of drinking. In these excerpts, the participants can be seen to collaboratively close talk initiated by the request for information or confirmation. This further highlights the participants' orientation to progress talk in these instances, as well as the fact that the participants keep drinking trajectories open. Such orientation can be seen in how a participant suspending drinking either holds the cup in a provisional home position or even places the cup on the table, and resumes drinking when the issue has been collaboratively dealt with, clarified and closed (see Sutinen 2014).

4.3. To talk or not to talk

The last excerpt presents a situation where five people are sitting in the break room and sharing stories of starting a new job. During the discussion, Emma suspends drinking in a way that suggests she may be preparing to take a turn at talk. However,

instead of producing a verbal turn, she alternates between drinking advancement and retraction before finally moving on with drinking.

The participants are positioned around the table, with Emma sitting a bit further away from the others but actively following and participating in the conversation. Prior to the excerpt shown here, Marko has been telling the others about an incident that happened to someone at the start of their new job. The other participants, Sanna, Kristiina and Emma, appear to be amused by the telling, and some align with Marko's telling verbally. Emma has affiliated with her co-interlocutors' positionings by bowing her head down and touching her forehead with the fingers of her left hand in a "facepalm" gesture (see e.g., Jakonen/Evnitskaya 2020). At the beginning of the excerpt, Marko continues his telling.

Excerpt (6): ((Break_data. "Like seven hundred times"))

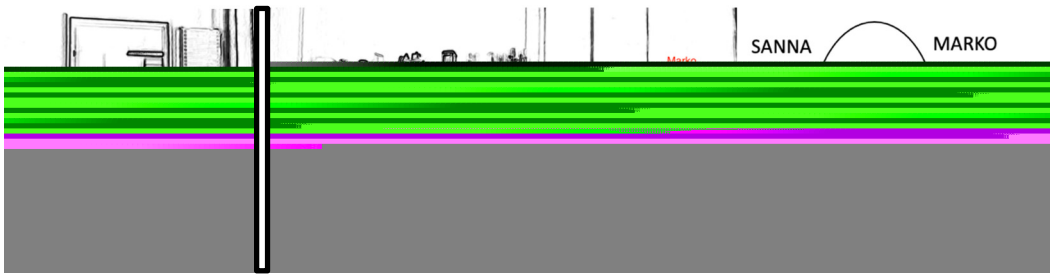

Figure 6[3]

```
01 MAR: mut siis olihan se- oliha se siinä
              but I mean they were
  emm  >>gz mar-->
02 MAR: puhelimessa olih   a se hirveen nolo.
              very embarrassed on the phone
  emm                    lifts from tb. to lips-->
03 SAN:    mm[mm.      ]
  emm     withdraws from lips-->
04 MAR:    [e   t sillä] tavalla
                        I mean like that
  emm    -->   brings to lips-->
05      (.)   (0.3)
  emm   ->   withdraws from lips
06 SAN: no hy#[vä sen   täs äly            ) si?] h   e he he
              well good at least they realised that
  fig       #6
  emm                brings to lips   drinks-->>
  emm                                      ) gz cup-->>
```

As Marko continues his telling, Emma is looking in Marko's direction and, towards the end of Marko's turn, she lifts her cup from the table to her lips (l.2). Sanna aligns with Marko's telling on line 3, producing a *mmm*, during which Emma lowers her cup from her lips briefly which suggests that she may be preparing to take a turn. However, during Marko's following turn (l.4), she brings the cup back up to her lips, again momentarily advancing the drinking.

[3] The figure in this excerpt is from 360° camera footage: two images from different points have been separated by a column.