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Institutional interaction

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1. Introduction

When the participants in interaction discuss matters connected to at least one of the participants' work-related tasks, the interaction can be described as institutional. In contrast to everyday sociable conversations, in institutional interaction there is a purpose that participants try to achieve, for example when a person with a cold books an appointment with a medical doctor. However, the difference between everyday conversation and institutional talk is not straightforward or self-evident but rather a result of the participants' orientations to the situation, manifested in the design of their talk (e.g. Drew & Heritage 1992: 22). Consider the following examples, which both demonstrate a 'how are you doing' sequence in an opening phase of a doctor's appointment in Finland.

(1a) Doctor-patient interaction (Raevaara, Ruusuvuori & Haakana 2001: 25)

01 DOC: **mitäs kuu[luu.**
 how are you doing

02 PAT: **[.hhh no nyt on semmonen vaiva ollu**
 PRT now I have had a problem probably

03 **vissii kesästä lähtie< et mua painaa, (0.2) tähä.**
 since summer that I feel pressure (0.2) here

¹ The names of the authors are in alphabetical order. The authors have contributed to the chapter equally.

04 DOC: **joo:=**
 yes

05 PAT: **=ja h- niinku hengittäessäki - -**
 and like even when I breath - -

(1b) Doctor-patient interaction (Raevaara, Ruusuvuori & Haakana 2001: 25)

01 DOC: **no nii:n ja mitäs kuuluu,**
 PRT PRT *and how are you doing*

02 **(.)**

03 PAT: **hhh >no< kuule mulle kuuluu niin paljon kuule**
 PRT *I am doing very well*

04 **hyvää tiä[ksää ny mä juur tossa kerroin**
 you know as I just told there

05 DOC: **[no?**
 PRT

06 PAT: **.hh[h minä olen jo iso <mummu> hh[hh**
 I am already a great grandmother

07 DOC: **[nii:?** **[ihanko totta=**
 yes *really*

08 **[onneks folkoo:f,]**
 congratulations

08 PAT: **[joo:: hhhh heh]**
 yes

In example 1a, the patient receives the doctor's *how are you doing* question (line 1) as a solicitation to describe the problem that brought her to the doctor's appointment, and she initiates an immediate description of symptoms (line 2). However, in example 1b, while the physical setting of the interaction as well as the doctor's *how are you doing* question are similar to example 1a, the patient's response conveys another type of

interpretation, and does not provide a problem description but rather news about her personal life. Thus, in example 1a, the patient oriented to the institutional purpose of the meeting, whereas in example 1b, the patient adopts a more conversational orientation to the *how are you doing* question. Thereby the patients' differing answers to basically the same question in the same physical context contribute either to the "institutional" (Example 1a) or "conversational" (Example 1b) character of the interaction during the opening phase of a doctor's appointment.

Examples 1a and 1b showcase a typical analytical perspective to institutional interaction within conversation analysis (CA). From very early on, CA has worked on interactions in institutional settings, beginning from Sacks' study on calls to a suicide prevention center (Sacks 1967). The interest in the specifics of certain institutional contexts began in the 1970's (Atkinson & Drew 1979 on courtroom; Mehan 1979 on classroom). From 1990's onwards, the array of different institutional contexts under study have become manifold (see examples in Heritage & Clayman 2010: 1). Institutional CA has thus established itself as "other main line of investigation in CA research" (Clift, Drew & Hutchby 2006) or "the second type of CA" (Heritage & Clayman 2010: 16). Some of the most extensively studied contexts – besides courtroom and classroom – are emergency calls and help lines, doctor–patient interaction, and mass communication (see Heritage & Clayman 2010).

This chapter offers a conversation analytic (e.g. Clift 2016) and interactional linguistic (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018) approach to the research on institutional interaction. Our approach differs from, for example, a strictly sociological perspective to work-related interaction in that it focusses on linguistic practices and grammar in institutional interaction. First, we offer a brief introduction to the premises of Institutional Conversation Analysis (section 2). Then, in section 3, we focus on a specific institutional context, sales interaction, by analyzing and comparing convenience stores encounters and business-to-business sales meetings. This section demonstrates how the design of linguistic practices in talking about service or product price vary, and how this variation is related to the difference in the overall purpose of the sales meeting as well as the participant's orientations to it.

2. *Institutional CA*

In this section, we will review research on institutional interaction from a conversation analytic (CA) and interactional linguistic point of view.² This means that we adopt a particular perspective on the relationship of

² For other perspectives such as sociolinguistic, speech act and discourse analytic, and the general development of the field, see, e.g., the overviews by Drew & Heritage (1992: 6–16) and Drew & Sorjonen (2011: 194–196).

institutional roles, practices and the use of language. According to this view, language is not necessarily considered institutional just because of the actual institutional roles of speakers (representatives of institutions and their clients) or the location of the interaction (e.g. doctor's office, classroom). For example, professionals and clients can embark on a casual conversation inside the institutional setting, thus putting their institutional roles aside. On the other hand, speakers can use language that is characteristic of a specific institutional situation regardless of the location of the interaction or the actual professional roles of the speakers, e.g. a family member may be "interrogated" at a breakfast table. (See, e.g., Drew & Sorjonen 2011: 192.)

The key issue is whether or not the participants orient to their institutional roles in a given situation and how "institutions are enacted and lived through as accountable patterns of meaning, inference, and action" (Drew & Heritage 1992: 5). In a similar vein, institutionality does not refer so much to the stable institutional settings (e.g. medical, educational, legal) and their specifics but to the local and transformable product of the participants' own actions (Drew & Heritage 1992: 19), that is, how institutions are "talked into being" (Heritage 1984: 290).

Another key aspect of the CA approach to institutional interaction is that it is being compared to ordinary conversation. That is, ordinary/mundane conversation (i.e. casual conversation between friends or family members without goal-orientation) is seen as the primary form of social interaction,

which means that the study of institutional talk builds on the findings of the research on everyday talk (Heritage 1984: 238–240). The central difference is that institutional talk involves different kinds of restrictions or specifications compared to what people do when interacting with their friends and family (e.g. Heritage & Clayman 2010: 16). Drew & Heritage (1992: 22; see also Heritage 1997) present three central features of institutional interaction: 1) the conversation has an institution-specific goal 2) participation to the conversation involves specific constraints 3) the participants resort to institution-specific inferential frameworks.

An illustrative example of the difference between institutional and ordinary talk is the fact that professionals in for example medical, legal and news-interview contexts typically withhold the expression of sympathy, agreement or surprise towards what the layperson says. Withholding these in professional contexts may be expected, while in everyday talk it would be considered disaffiliative. (Drew & Heritage 1992: 24.) Similarly, customers in telemarketing calls do not volunteer a positive evaluation of a salesperson's "good news", such as *with that your ((investment)) is therefore multiplied by five*, but rather offer a neutral acknowledgement (e.g. *mhm*). In everyday conversation, however, "good news" are generally received with a positive evaluation (e.g. *oh that's good!*, Mazeland 2004).

On the level of specific linguistic practices, we can consider how question-answer sequences are constructed. It has been observed that while acknowledging an answer to a question with the particle *oh* is very common in everyday talk, one rarely finds it in institutional contexts (Heritage 1985; Drew & Heritage 1992: 41–42; Heritage & Clayman 2010: 18). On the other hand, the questioner’s evaluation of the correctness of the answer (e.g. *that’s right*) is characteristic to a specific institutional context, classroom or other educational interaction, while in everyday talk that would be considered “bizarre” (Drew & Heritage 1992: 40–41; see Mehan 1985). In fact, it has been suggested that each institution has its own “fingerprint” when it comes to the typical linguistic and interactional practices that are employed to fulfill their institution-specific tasks (Drew & Heritage 1992: 26; Heritage & Clayman 2010: 18). Thus, when observing language use in institutional settings, we can see that the participants’ conduct is shaped and constrained by their orientations to their institutional roles as, e.g., a professional and a client in a specific institution, and the ways in which they manage their institutional activities (Drew & Heritage 1992: 5; Drew & Sorjonen 2011: 212).

Despite the fact that each institutional context has its unique “fingerprint”, research has identified several general dimensions of interaction that can be put in service of institutional goals across different contexts. According to Drew & Heritage (1992: 29; see also Heritage 1997: 225; Arminen 2005:

53–56) these are 1) lexical choice 2) turn design 3) sequence organization 4) overall structure 5) social epistemology and social relations. These are thus areas that the research may focus on. Institutionality is managed through these dimensions (ibid.); basically any feature can be in its service. Taking a bit more linguistic perspective, Drew & Sorjonen (2011: 196) identify aspects such as *verbal conduct*, e.g. turn taking, and *the use of linguistic resources* such as person reference, lexical choice and grammatical construction, through which the participants orient to their institutional roles and tasks. Perhaps the most recognizable and most widely studied example of the interactional dimensions that can and is adjusted to serve institutional goals is turn-taking. That is, some institutional contexts – such as classroom or courtroom – have been characterized as *formal* based on their restricted turn-taking system as compared to everyday conversation, i.e. turns are preallocated between the participants. (E.g. Drew & Sorjonen 2011: 196–199; Heritage & Drew 1992: 25–27, 39.) In these formal institutional interactions, preallocation may generally concern the distribution of turns, i.e., who is allowed to speak and when, but also the turn types that each participant is expected to use. Drew & Heritage (1992: 39–40; see also Drew & Sorjonen 2011: 197) point out that many of the institutional interactions, also the less formal ones, are mostly built on sequences of questions and answers, and it is the professional who typically asks the questions and the layman (clients/patients/pupils etc.) who provide the answers. This unequally distributed question-answer patterning is an

example of *asymmetry* between the participants typical of institutional interaction (see Drew & Heritage 1992: 49; Heritage 1997: 236–240).

CA research on institutional interaction has been conducted in many different contexts (see e.g. The Handbook of Conversation Analysis chapters on classroom interaction (Gardner 2013), doctor-patient interaction (Teas Gill & Roberts 2013), news interviews (Clayman 2013), courtroom interaction (Komter 2013), and psychotherapy interaction (Peräkylä 2013)). This chapter describes research on a work-related context that has begun to receive more attention in CA, interactions between a salesperson and a customer (e.g. Llewellyn 2015; Mondada & Sorjonen 2016; Lindström et al. 2017; De Stefani 2018; Stokoe et al. 2020). Research in this area has studied, for example, rapport building in business-to-business sales meetings (Clark, Drew & Pinch 2003; Kaski, Niemi & Pullins 2018), accounting for the reason for visit or the on-going action at a convenience store (Haakana & Sorjonen 2011; Raevaara 2011), and the salesperson's preliminary actions in alluring the customer to align with the ensuing business proposal (Mazeland 2004; Humă, Stokoe & Sikveland 2018).

In what follows, we analyze selling and buying in two related yet very differently organized settings, convenience store encounters and business-to-business meetings to give. As an example of Institutional CA, we compare one recurrent and even mandatory phase of these encounters, the

announcement or negotiation of product or service price across these two settings. We will show that the general institutional task of the encounter, its overall structure and the roles of the participants are essential when considering the ways in which the price of the purchase is announced or negotiated and how this activity is sequentially located. Comparing different situations brings into surface the similarities and differences between the interactional practices in different settings and also to what kind of aspects of the situation itself the practices are related to (Lindfors & Raevaara 2005).

3. Analyzing institutional talk: examples from sales encounters

In this section, we study how the service or product price is handled in salesperson-customer interaction. What we present here is based on our previous individual studies that we now bring together to shed light on the relationship between linguistic practices and context-specific institutional tasks and orientations (see Koivisto & Halonen 2009; Halonen & Koivisto 2009; Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming; Niemi & Hirvonen 2019). We demonstrate that the topic of price is dealt with in different ways in convenience stores and in business-to-business sales interaction: in convenience stores, the price is mostly announced by the salesperson after the customer has decided to buy something (chapter 3.1), whereas in business-to-business sales interaction, price is requested by the customer

before he or she has made up his or her mind on whether to make a purchase or not (chapter 3.2).

3.1 Salesperson announces the price

We will start the analytic part of the chapter by discussing sales interaction in Finnish convenience stores/kiosks (“R-kioski”). As the central characteristic of this type of institutional interaction, they embody a fairly stable overall structure; on the whole the interactions are short and extremely routinized. The typical overall structure can be schematized as follows (see also Raevaara & Sorjonen 2006: 127–128; Koivisto & Halonen 2009: 122–123; Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming; S=salesperson, C=client):

1. S: greeting
C: greeting

2. C: request(s)
S: ((grants the request(s)))

3. S: inquiry for possible additional purchases (*tuleeko muuta* ‘come-Q else-PAR’ “something else?”)
C: negative answer, i.e. claiming no further purchases (‘no’)
S: announcement of the price
C: ((hands the money over to the salesperson))
S: ((goes to cash register, comes back with the change))

4. C: Thank you
S: Thank you
(+ Goodbyes)

The core of the encounter is the verbal or nonverbal request by the client and its fulfillment by the salesperson (phase 2), and the paying phase (phase 3). After the payment has been successfully accomplished, the encounter comes to its end. Within this overall structure, we will now pay closer attention to the payment phase and the design of the price announcement turn. In fact, the paying phase has its own sequential structure and logic. Previously it has been claimed (Koivisto & Halonen 2009; Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming) that the key point for moving from the request phase to the payment phase is the salesperson's inquiry for possible additional purchases, i.e. 'something else' inquiry (in Finnish typically *tuleeko muuta* 'come-Q else-PAR'). Koivisto & Halonen 2009 (see also Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming) argue that this question is not so much a genuine request for additional purchases (even though it offers the last opportunity for doing them) as it is an indication of the salesperson's preparedness to receive the payment. In addition, it reflects the salesperson's interpretation of the completion of the request phase: at this point, the client has most likely listed all his/her requests.³ The paying phase consists of a fixed four-

³ In a previous study (Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming) it was observed that in a typical encounter the client takes out the money at the point when he/she has made their last request. This then may function as the clue for the salesperson that the client is ready to

part sequence: 1) ‘something else’ inquiry 2) negative answer 3) announcement of the price, 4) paying. This routinization suggests that the ‘something else’ inquiry indeed paves the way for paying. Example 2 is a case in point.

(2) (Halonen & Koivisto forthcoming; Kotus, T516)

C COMES TO PICTURE HOLDING HIS WALLET

01 C: **hyvää huomen[ta.**
 good morning.

02 S: [>(no)< hei.
 PRT hello.

03 (0.2)

04 C: **kym↑menen sarjal #<lip:[pu>;**
 ten-trip ticket.

05 S: [**Helsingin**
 Inside Helsinki (area.)

sisä[inev °(vai)°;]

06 C: [↓joo:] **sisäi+ne.**
 yeah. Inside.

 +*S reads barcode*

07 *(2.6)
 **C takes a note from the wallet*

08 S: **ja sitted muuta.h=**
 and then something else.

09 C: **=ei *#muuta; (.) °tällä [kertaa°.**

move on to the paying phase. As noted, this interpretation is confirmed by the negative answer to the ‘something else’ inquiry.

nothing else; (.) this time.

**starts handing the note*

10 S: [kakstoista ja

twelve and

11 kahdeksan↑ky⁺mmen#tä kiitos:;

eighty thank you;

+ salesperson takes the note

12 (5.4) S WORKS AT THE CASHIER

13 S: (ja) sei:tsemän kakskymmentä ole hyvä.

and seven twenty here you are.

14 C: kii↑tos:;

thank you

After the client's negative answer (line 9) to the 'something else' inquiry (line 8), the salesperson announces the price of the purchase in the form of an NP ('twelve and eighty' in lines 10–11). It is followed by 'thank you' without a prosodic break. The video recording reveals that the client hands over the money simultaneously with the announcement; thus, the salesperson is able to grab the money and say 'thank you' immediately after the price announcement. This shows that the turn functions as an indication for the readiness to receive and thus an *announcement* of the price rather than a *request* for payment. This is also reflected in the turn's minimal design, the NP. By contrast, if the client is not ready prepared to pay immediately, the salesperson may tell the price in longer format (a full clause or an NP accompanied by turn-initial particles), thus giving more time – as it were – for the client to pay (see Halonen & Koivisto 2009; cf. also Sorjonen & Raevaara 2014). That is, the design of the price

announcement turn reflects the salesperson's observation of the client's preparedness to pay on time or with a delay, i.e. their multimodal behavior. In any case, price announcement is typically a non-problematic routine part of the encounter.

In this section, we demonstrated how a routine sales interaction, encounter at a kiosk, follow a specific overall structure and how the paying phase is organized within it. We also saw that the price is rather announced than requested, and this happens in a simple noun phrase format. We will now proceed to sales encounters that involve a more complex negotiation of the price of the purchase.

3.2 Customer requests for the price

Whereas convenience store encounters tend to be short and have a relatively fixed overall structure, business-to-business sales meetings between a sales representative and a prospective customer last longer and the overall structure has more variation. However, it is possible to observe the general phases of the meeting opening (often referred to as *the approach* in the marketing literature), a service or product presentation, customer's questions or objections, and the closing (cf. Dubinsky 1981). Within this overall structure, price discussions occur after a salesperson has described the service and demonstrated how it can be applied in a context similar to the customer's business.

In contrast to the convenience store interaction, in business-to-business sales interaction service or product price is requested by a customer. The customer's price request initiates a three-part sequence that consists of the price question, a salesperson's price informing, and the customer's price receipt. However, before the price informing, a salesperson as a rule initiates an insert expansion (Schegloff 2007: 106-109) to tailor the price to the customer and to create value (Niemi & Hirvonen 2019; on the concept of value, see e.g. Grönroos 2011).

Example 3 demonstrates a case in point. In it, we join a technology-mediated sales meeting. The salesperson has called the prospective customer at a mutually agreed upon date and shared a computer screen view with her. He utilizes the shared screen to give slide shows as well as to demonstrate the offered service in practice. The salesperson represents a company that offers a project management and work-time tracking solution, and the customer represents an organization that operates in the construction business. The customer has asked about a detail of the service, and the salesperson is just wrapping up his answer (line 1).

(3) A business-to-business sales meeting (Niemi & Hirvonen 2019)

01 S: **mut se [löytyy täältä listalta kuitenkin.**
 but you'll find it on the list anyway.

02 C: [°joo°.
 yes.

03 C: joo. juuriki.
yes. right.

04 S: joo.
yes.

05 S: .mt .hhh yes hh.
yes

06 S: [tota tota.]
well well.

07 C: [aika] ↑pienet on meidän (.) meidän tarpeet
our needs are (.) are quite modest

08 mut toi,
but ehm

09 (3.0)

10 S: [joo-o.
u-huh.

11 C: [kyllä tämmönen,
surely this kind of (thing)

12 (2.0)

13 C: minkäs ↑hintanen tämmönen ↑olis.
what would be the price for this kind of (thing).

14 S: .hhh tää on tota >niin niin< (1.8) teit oli (.)
this is erm um um (1.8) you were (.)

15 montako käyttäjää teitä kaiken kaikkiaan oli.
how many users you had again altogether.

16 C: joku (.) al↑le ↓kymmenen.
around (.) under ten.

17 S: alle kymmenen eli #öö# sanoitko (.) #ö#
under ten so did you say (.)

18 seittemän käyttäjää #suurin piirtei#.
roughly seven users.

19 C: (vai) kahdeksa.
(or) eight.

20 (.)

21 S: kaheksa. (0.2) #joo.# odotas hetki. .hhh meillä on
eight. (0.2) yes. wait a moment. we have

22 sillä >tavalla että meillä on< perusmaksu tällä

While customer's price questions are rare in a convenience store interaction, when such a question occurs, it is generally presented in a phrasal form (e.g. *paljonko* 'how much'; Halonen & Koivisto 2009: 157). The phrasal question implies that the customer is ready to pay. In Example 3, the customer's full clause question (*minkäs hintanen tämmönen olis*, 'what would be the price for this kind of (thing)', line 13) avoids such an implication. Furthermore, the conditional mood in *olis*, 'would be', implies that the price is under negotiation and might affect the customer's decision to buy.

A further difference between the price discussion in convenience stores and business-to-business sales interaction is that if the client in convenience store asks for the price, the salesperson most often provides a phrasal response (*kaks euroo* 'two euros'; Halonen & Koivisto 2009: 157). This type of answer is in line with the observation that in everyday English conversation, after a question-word interrogative, a phrasal response is a default or 'no problem' answer (Thompson et al. 2015: 23-28). Indeed, a salesperson's phrasal price informing is as a rule followed by a transition to payment. Yet in Example 3, the salesperson begins to formulate his price informing as a clause (*tää on*, 'this is', line 14). Instead of completing the utterance, he then initiates an insert expansion in which he seeks information about the number of people that would use the product within customer's organization (lines 15–16). Only after the salesperson has received the customer's estimation of this number, he continues his price

informing. It is produced in three parts: first, in a clausal form, he mentions the basic monthly fee (lines 22–23), second, the fee that depends on the number of people that use the application (lines 25–26), and third, the combined sum of parts 1 and 2 per month (lines 27–28).

By telling the price in an expanded clausal response, the salesperson displays the price as consisting of certain parts and as tailored individually for the customer (*teille*, ‘for you’, line 27). Thus, by using an expanded clausal response the salesperson orients to the customer’s indecision and to the on-going sales work. We note that the salesperson could also have told the price using a phrasal formulation such as ‘thirty-eight euros per month plus seven euros per user’. However, had he done this, he would have provided information on their general pricing policy instead of the price that is tailored for the current customer. After the salesperson’s answer, the prospect acknowledges the price informing with the most common price receipt in our data, *joo* ‘yeah’ (line 30). With this third position *joo*, the customer registers the price informing and claims understanding of it, but does not evaluate it (cf. Sorjonen 2001: 154–157). Here, after some further discussion, the customer agrees to try the salesperson’s service for a test period of one month.

We have seen that in business-to-business sales interaction, a price discussion differs in many ways from the common way that the price discussions occur in convenience stores (see Section 3.1). The most striking

difference is that in convenience stores, price is commonly announced by the salesperson, whereas in business-to-business meetings, it is requested by the customer. Besides that, there are differences in the design of the turns during price discussion. First, the customers in business-to-business sales interaction use full clause questions instead of phrasal ones, thus implying a lack of decision to buy. Second, a salesperson's response to a customer's price question is delayed by a pre-second insert expansion. The salesperson uses this expansion to customize the price informing to the customer and to show what he or she would gain in return for his or her financial sacrifices, or in other words, to create value for the customer. Finally, the salesperson offers an expanded clausal answer that orients to the on-going sales negotiation. Overall, in a kiosk and probably in other low-value business-to-consumer interactions as well (e.g. Vázquez Carranza, 2017), if the customer asks for the price, s/he does it after s/he has decided to buy a product, but in business-to-business context, such decision is yet to be made. These differences are reflected in the design of the customer's and the salesperson's turns in price negotiation.

Example 2 showed the typical case from kiosk encounters. In it, the salesperson announced the price at the point when all the necessary preparations for receiving the payment (reading barcodes from the products) had been accomplished and the completion of the request phase had been confirmed (with the client's negative answer to the 'something else')

inquiry). In some convenience store encounters, however, more explicit negotiation about the price of the products and/or the transition to the paying phase may be needed. Example 4 illustrates a rare case that involves negotiation about the price. We will show that in this case, the overall structure of the interaction and participant roles differ from the typical case demonstrated in Example 2. Before the extract, the customer has put a candy bar at the counter saying ‘I’ll take this’, which constitutes his first request. Then (line 1) he asks the salesperson whether they sell cigarette lighters at the kiosk.

(4) (Kotus, T594, Koivisto & Halonen 2009: 138)

- 01 C: >ja sitte tota< onks sul jotai sytyt:timiä.
and then uhm do you have some kind of lighters.
- 02 (1.2) S STOPS READING THE BARCODE, PUTS CANDYBAR BACK
TO THE COUNTER
- 03 S: siitä #löytyy# ↑se[mmo(nen); POINTS AT THE LIGHTERS ON
THE COUNTER
there is one (of that kind)
- 04 C: [joku halpa;h
some cheap
- 05 (0.2)
- 06 ihan halpa;=
really cheap
- 07 S: =↑tää on <yks:>; POINTS AT LIGHTERS BEHIND HER
this is one
- 08 (.)

09 C: **>paljo se< maksaa,**
how much is it

10 (.)

11 S: **>yks eu^oro^o<.** LOOKS AT C
one euro

12 (0.2)

13 C: **yks euro.h**
one euro.

14 S: **mm.**
mm.

15 C: **.hh no mä otan niit kaks (sitte)h.**
PRT I'll take two of them then.

16 S: **onks väril välii.**
does the color matter.

17 C: **↓e:i.**
no.

18 (2.4) S TAKES THE LIGHTERS OUT OF A BOX BEHIND HER

19 S: **°(--)**

20 (0.8)

21 C: **ja sit toi.** POINTS AT THE CANDY BAR AT THE COUNTER
and then that one.

22 (0.8)

23 C: ***se on sillo,**
that's then,

24 *S READS THE BARCODE

25 (0.8)

26 S: **<se_on *sitte> k:ol(o)me' euroa [°tasan°.**
that's then three euros exactly.

27 *S HITS THE CASH REGISTER

The salesperson first points at lighters located close to the client, at the counter. However, the client ignores this and specifies his request: the lighter needs to be very cheap (lines 4, 6). The salesperson then offers ones behind her back, arguably referring to their price ('this is one', line 7). Apparently not grasping "one" as the price of the lighters, the client then inquires their price in a full clause QWI ('how much is it', line 9). The salesperson provides the answer by telling the price in NP format, thus orienting to the price as a non-problematic and non-negotiable fact ('one euro', line 11). This is a clear difference to what we saw in business-to-business sales interaction (example 4). However, asking for the price of the lighters does not constitute a transition to the paying phase (cf. example 3), since the decision to buy has not been made at this point. After an understanding check and a confirming response, the client makes an explicit decision on buying the product ('I'll take two of them then', line 15). The particle 'then' in his turn marks the turn as being based on the previous exchange. This completes the negotiations of the products/price. However, the request phase continues with the salesperson asking an additional question about the client's preference for the color of the lighters (line 16). After the completion of this sequence, the client starts the transition to the paying phase on his own initiative. This is done by a repetition of the first request ('and then that one', line 21) and pointing gesture, which suggests that he does not want anything else. After that, he explicitly asks about the (total) price of the purchases by producing a syntactically incomplete

structure ('that is then', line 23) for the salesperson to complete. The salesperson then responds by announcing the total price of the purchases ('that's three euros exactly then', line 26).

In this kiosk encounter then, the transition from the request phase to the payment phase is exceptionally initiated by the client. The fact that this is done by the client instead of the salesperson, however, can be explained by the discrepancy between the timing of the salesperson's activities and that of the client. We saw that in the typical encounter (example 2) the salesperson makes the initiatives of moving on to the next phase based on his/her own preparedness and his/her judgement of the client's preparedness. In this case, however, the client does not wait until the salesperson has completed her tasks (i.e. read the barcodes from each product, which is a prerequisite for receiving the payment) but makes the transition on his own initiative. This creates an impression of being in a hurry. The discrepancy of the participants' activities is reflected in the design of the salesperson's price announcement turn that is produced in response to the client's incomplete utterance ('that is then'). That is, the salesperson does not merely complete client's syntactic incomplete utterance with an NP and thereby align with the clients pace, but produces the price after a delay in a full-clause format ('that's then three euros exactly', line 16). In fact, at this point, she is still performing the last tasks of the request phase (hits the cash register, line 24). The delay and full clause format of the price turn seems to serve two

functions: first, it “buys more time” for the salesperson to complete her tasks. Second, it can be heard as doing resistance to the fact that the client sets the pace for the encounter. By using an independent clause, she makes the price announcement part of her own agenda, instead of just giving an answer to the client (Koivisto & Halonen 2009).

In contrast to business-to-business sales encounters, price negotiations at kiosks are thus not a “natural” phase in the overall structure of the encounter but constitute a departure from it. Moreover, the example 4 above shows how departures from the typical overall structure and the participants’ expected behavior may be handled. We also saw how the turn design of the price announcement reflects the routine vs. non-routine course of the encounter. That is, when the participants break the routine for one reason or the other, they typically resort to more elaborate formulations in their institutional talk. The speaker’s thus make a selection, so to speak, of how they formulate their turns to advance some specific institutional goals (e.g. Heritage 1997: 234).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the conversation analytic and interactional linguistic approach to institutional interaction. We have seen that rather than a fixed setting, institutional context can be understood as a

moment-by-moment production of the participants, involving constant implicit negotiation about the general goal of the interaction and the participants' roles. Linguistic choices are also a product of these implicit negotiations, while also reflecting the specifics of the institutional situation that the participants orient to.

Whereas earlier research on institutional interaction have discussed various contexts of talk at work and studied their constitutive actions, our comparison of convenience store encounters and business-to-business sales negotiations have demonstrated that even within a context of buying and selling, a constitutive phase of the encounter - talk about the price of the product - may be organized differently depending on the institution-specific tasks. High-value business-to-business sales involves explicit negotiations about the price, which precedes the customer's decision to buy. The linguistic design of the customer's price inquiry (full-clause QWT's) as well as the salesperson's multistep, full-clause price informing reflect the lack of the customer's decision to buy. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the participants' orient to the price discussion as a possibility to negotiate the deal.

In more routinized kiosk encounters, where the value of the purchase is lower, the clients' have made a decision to buy prior to the payment phase, and the price announcement happens on the salesperson's initiative. We also

saw that while in business-to-business interaction, price is announced in a full clause format, in kiosks, the salesperson typically uses the “non-problematic” NP, even when the client has initiated the paying phase by asking the price (see Example 4). Full-clause responses in kiosks are reserved for special purposes that involve a departure from the main line on talk, while phrasal responses orient and contribute to the routinized character of the convenience store interaction. The difference in the composition of the paying phase/price negotiation thus stem from the different goals of the interaction that affect their overall structure and the roles that the salesperson and the client orient to.

Future research on institutional interaction could involve similar in-depth comparisons between the constitutive parts of institutional contexts that are broadly of the same type but differ with respect to their general goals and the roles that participants orient to. Studies like this have been done at least within psychotherapy research, where different frameworks such as psychoanalysis and cognitive psychotherapy have been compared (Weiste 2015). Another future direction in institutional CA that will most likely attract increasing interest – boosted by the covid19 pandemic - is technologically mediated interactions such as interactions in different kinds of chat services or video-mediated consultations (e.g. Stommel & Molder 2015; Stommel, van Goor & Stommel 2019).

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