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The Social Organization of Institutional Norms

Interactional Management of Knowledge, Entitlement and Stance

Med en sammanfattning:
Institutionella normer i samtal. Social organisering av kunskap, berättigande och positionering.
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Abstract

The present thesis explores talk in institutional settings, with a particular focus on how institutionality and institutional norms are constructed and reproduced in interaction. A central aim is to enhance our understanding of how institutional agendas are talked into being. In line with the ethnomethodological approach, norms are viewed as accomplished in everyday interaction, whereas institutionality represents dimensions of talk where participants demonstrably orient to particular contextual constraints. Five studies were conducted using Conversation Analysis (CA), focusing on how institutional constraints impact sequential trajectories and shape different opportunities for participants.

The data consists of two corpora of video recordings: group tutorials at a Swedish university (UTs), and performance appraisal interviews in an organization (PAIs). The thesis pays particular attention to the interactional management of knowledge, entitlement and stance, and analytic foci include how speakers manage epistemic claims and rights at a certain point in interaction, and how they accomplish social positioning. The UT studies examine the negotiation of rights to speak for others in a group (Study I), and how diverging understandings of the institutional activity-at-hand can be negotiated on the basis of students’ advice-seeking questions (Study II). In Study III, orientations to institutional and sociocultural norms are investigated in the PAIs, where managers and employees treat negative stances on stress as problematic. The relationship between theory and institutional practice in the use of question templates in PAIs is also examined, through an analysis of the delivery and receipt of a particular question in different interviews (Study IV). Focusing on different adaptations of a preset item, this analysis shows how the same question sets up for a variety of subsequent actions. Finally, deployment of the verb känna (‘feel’) in managing epistemic access and primacy is examined (Study V). It is argued that ‘feel’ allows for a reduction of accountability when making epistemic claims. The studies highlight the relationship between linguistic formats and social actions and illustrate how institutional agendas have consequences for participant conduct. Attention to the details of actions in institutional interaction can thus shed light on social and linguistic underpinnings of the enactment of institutional norms.

Keywords: institutional interaction, institutional norms, conversation analysis, seminar, performance appraisal interview, stance, epistemics, entitlement.

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Demands will not be gained by wishing, 
but it is by wrestling life is to be won.

Mouneer Al Shaarani
List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


IV Nyroos, Lina & Sandlund, Erica, submitted: From paper to practice: Asking and responding to a standardized question item in performance appraisal interviews.

V Nyroos, Lina, submitted: It feels kinda important maybe: ‘Feel’ as an interactional resource for managing stance and accountability.

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I still vividly remember the first time I came into contact with Conversation Analysis on an undergraduate course. There was no doubt about it: the systematic organization of talk-in-interaction was the most intriguing thing I had come across in my studies. I had to learn more about this, and consequently all my essays came to focus on various aspects of interaction in institutional settings. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that this should later be the subject of my thesis. While working on this dissertation I have not only observed participants in interaction, I have myself participated in countless social interactions. Now I would like to draw attention to some of the people who have made the preparation of this thesis a (for the most part) pleasant experience.

First, I want to thank the teacher, students, managers and employees in the video-recorded data for giving me (and my project co-workers) the opportunity to closely examine a few minutes of your lives, which you probably barely remember. Thank you!

While I was still an undergraduate student, Anna Lindström generously provided me with access to her home help service data. Her fascination for Conversation Analysis rubbed off, and she encouraged me to continue on to graduate level. Anna remained my supervisor until she took up a position at Örebro University, and I thank her for teaching me always to turn to the data for answers. When Anna left Uppsala, my second supervisor at the time, Björn Melander, became my principal supervisor. With his thorough knowledge of science in general and Scandinavian languages in particular, Björn has guided me towards my goal. He sets an example to other supervisors when it comes to availability and encouragement. Thank you for always seeing solutions rather than problems.

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Martin Naylor has proofread most parts of the thesis, and I thank him for scrutinizing, and hence improving, my texts. Any errors left are mine. I also thank my childhood friend Charlotta Sahlberg for the cover illustration. Close friend Alexandra Czartoryski has helped on numerous matters, and best buddy Sofia Sjöqvist is a constant source of madness.

Last but not least I want to thank my immediate family, my parents Gurli and Lasse for always cheering me on. And to the men in my life, my fantastic husband Erik who seems to have endless faith in my capacity, and my son Kurt – the joy of my heart: I cannot begin to express my love for you.

Uppsala, March 2012

Lina Nyroos
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1 Introduction

Interest in talk in institutional settings has been lively ever since the systematic study of conversational interaction began to gain ground in the late 1960s. Institutional interactions that have been studied by interaction scholars include court proceedings (e.g. Atkinson & Drew 1979; Maynard 1984), educational interaction (e.g. McHoul 1978; Tracy 1997; Waring 2002a, 2002b; Sandlund 2004; Benwell & Stokoe 2005 [2004]; Lindström 2011), news interviews (e.g. Schegloff 1988/89; Clayman & Heritage 2002; Maynard 2003), and doctor–patient encounters (e.g. Peräkylä 1995, 1997; Heritage & Maynard 2005; Stivers 2007). Studies such as these have made the concept of ‘institutional talk’ relevant, since it refers to “repetitive episodes that, within a constrained range of variation, exhibit a similar structure” (Zimmerman & Boden 1991:13). This means that certain patterns recur and are treated as the expected course of action. At the doctor’s office, for example, it is normal for the doctor to start by asking the patient how s/he is feeling/doing, and not the reverse. If the patient were to ask if the doctor is in good health, this would, in most cases, be regarded as a violation of expectations, and/or perhaps be treated as a joke. In this context, moreover, the question is most often understood as projecting a slot in the conversation for the patient to give the reason for the visit; this is usually where doctor and patient ‘get down to business’.

The above example illustrates two things. First, a specific action – in this case, asking about someone’s health – is perceived and treated differently depending on who is asking the question, and in what context the question is asked. Secondly, a specific action constitutes a building block in the construction of an institution. The specific features of an institution are not inherent in the walls of a school or hospital; it is fashioned by the actions performed by the participants, forming a routine, and ultimately bringing an institutional agenda into being. This may not appear to be a staggering statement, but the question is, by what interactional means do speakers construct what is perceived as ‘institutional’ – how is ‘institutionality’ accomplished?
1.1 Institutional orders in interaction

The present thesis explores interaction in two different institutional settings, namely undergraduate tutorials at a university and performance appraisal interviews (PAIs) in an organization in the financial sector. Five studies have been conducted, and various interactional actions and activities investigated. A broad focus of the thesis is institutionality, which I treat as dimensions of talk whereby participants demonstrably orient to particular constraints of the interactional context. This broad topic is addressed by examining general questions such as: how is institutionality made relevant; how does it impact the interaction in general and the sequential trajectory in particular; and how do the participants enact institutional norms that come to constitute a flexible frame? As these questions make clear, institutionality is not treated as fixed traits of interaction, but rather as something the participants can accomplish and manage, as well as negotiate the meaning of, during the course of the interaction.

The title of the thesis suggests a notion of ‘institutional norms’, and here I follow Heritage’s definition of norms as the “perceived normality” (1984: 116): that is, the usual organization of actions that is “seen but unnoticed” (loc. cit.) and does not cause the speakers to reflect upon breaches as something that appeared to be, or was experienced as, ‘strange’. Further, Heritage states that participants generally display great awareness of prevailing norms, as well as of the consequences (i.e. the accountability) of breaching such norms (1984:117). This perspective prevails throughout the thesis, as it considers norms to be accomplished interactionally, as well as seeing them as a parameter that speakers orient towards when organizing social actions.

I investigate this topic drawing on Conversation Analysis (henceforth abbreviated as CA), both as theory and method. CA offers an extensive body of literature targeting the “institutional order of interaction” as well as the “social and institutional orders in interaction” (Heritage 1997:222, italics in original). This is a somewhat simplified distinction between different works within the field of CA,¹ but it captures two approaches that differ slightly in scope. The former is concerned with studies seeking to explain the machinery of talk and social conduct that makes interaction between people – for the most part – quite unproblematic and indiscernible. This, of course, also works the other way around, that is, by serving to pinpoint interactional obstacles. Arminen (2005:2) encapsulates the essence of CA as follows:

¹ The “field of CA” does not imply the existence of a homogeneous field, or of a particular scholarly discipline. Rather, it refers to a versatile field encompassing a variety of research approaches which in some way draw on the premises of CA (a fuller account of which will be found in Chapter 2).
The basic idea of CA is so simple that it is difficult to grasp: CA studies what an utterance does in relation to the preceding one(s) and what implications an utterance poses for the next one(s).

Studies examining the relationship between utterances are concerned, for instance, with how we take turns, make repairs and negotiate overlaps and interruptions as we speak. This body of literature provides tools for the second approach mentioned, the one investigating the social and institutional orders \textit{in} interaction – which is the approach taken in the present thesis. In exploring this, I am interested in how institutional agendas are “talked into being” (Heritage 1984:290). Such an approach presupposes a view of institutionality as “evoked and made actionable in and through talk” (Heritage 1997:222). As noted above, this means that ‘institutional talk’ is not automatically a product of talk within an institutional framework such as a courtroom, classroom or doctor’s office. Institutionality is not inherent in the surrounding context or the participants’ roles, such as those of ‘doctor’ or ‘patient’ – rather, it is accomplished, negotiated and renegotiated through different procedures in talk.

1.2 Recurrent themes – \textit{knowledge and entitlement}, \textit{stance-taking} and \textit{linguistic expression}

The five studies making up this thesis explore different aspects of interaction in institutional contexts. The construction and management of different institutional agendas is an overall theme, investigated through a close examination of actions related to three aspects of interaction. These aspects, or themes as I have chosen to call them, are closely linked to each other. In some of the studies all the themes are present, while others focus on one or two of them. The first two themes are:

A. \textit{Knowledge} and \textit{entitlement}: How do speakers manage knowledge, and who has the right to say and do what at a certain time in interaction?
B. \textit{Stance-taking} and \textit{identities}: How do speakers accomplish social positioning in talk-in-interaction?

The third theme is twofold. First, it is a topic in its own right; second, it offers the means through which themes A and B are realized:

C. \textit{Linguistic expression}. ‘Linguistic expression’ refers to the linguistic design of turns and social actions, and includes for instance lexical
choice. The focus is always on the relationship between linguistic expressions and interactional function(s)/social action(s).\textsuperscript{2}

In line with Stivers et al. (2011), I consider \textit{knowledge} to be “dynamic, graded and multi-dimensional” (ibid., p. 3), which means that it can be displayed, managed and accomplished by participants in social interaction. This also means that “we can and do hold one another accountable for justifiably asserting our rights and fulfilling our obligations with respect to knowledge” (loc. cit.). This perspective, as noted by Stivers et al., implies two things. First, it presupposes a wide definition of ‘knowledge’, and second, it objectifies knowledge and places it in a position where it is more or less accessible to the parties concerned. A consequence of this is that it is a phenomenon that makes possible one type of social dimension in interaction: \textit{entitlement}.\textsuperscript{3}

That is, \textit{who} is entitled to \textit{do} and \textit{say what} regarding \textit{X}? (Cf. e.g. Asmuß 2011.)

The studies in the present thesis explore this dimension of interaction in various ways. For example, in Study II, the use of academic or topic-related terms is investigated. This might be considered a rather traditional aspect of knowledge display. In contrast, Study IV investigates how implicit knowledge concerning the organization’s goals is made relevant when employees are supposed to give an account of their performance at work, in relation to those goals. In addition, Study I looks at how restrictions concerning entitlement are made relevant when a student speaks for a subgroup within the larger group of students. These restrictions indicate a normative organization of rights to speak for someone besides oneself.

Rights and knowledge are often linked to social positioning and \textit{stance-taking} – as the management of knowledge invokes the participants’ positions relative to what is treated as a ‘knowable’. However, stance functions as a conceptual entity of its own, often in relation to specific linguistic items. Englebretson (2007) suggests a number of principles for defining it (further discussed in 2.2.3). Stance is concerned, for example, with some kind of personal attitude or evaluation, at the same time as it is indexical, meaning that it brings to light a sociocultural framework.

Studies I–V illustrate stance-taking from different perspectives, and link it to the participants’ understanding of the particular situation. In relation to the concept of contextually relevant identities, Studies I and III explore the construction of the identities “a good student” and “an ideal employee”. Through various procedures, the employees in Study III interactionally con-

\textsuperscript{2} Throughout the thesis, \textit{linguistic forms} and \textit{formats} are used interchangeably with \textit{linguistic expressions}, always referring to what is described under C.

\textsuperscript{3} I also use \textit{rights} and \textit{entitlement} interchangeably. This is because \textit{rights} is a more general term – and hence perhaps more accessible. However, rights do not imply any moral aspect, but should be regarded, just like entitlement, as something that is negotiable and – from an ethnomethodological perspective – capable of being studied in interaction.
struct experiences of stress that lead to stance-taking, and ultimately both construct and reflect an institutional agenda. A more linguistically based investigation of stance is found in Study V, which targets the use of the verb *känna* ‘feel’. This study explores the social actions organized by *känna* and suggests that it serves, for example, as a hedging device when epistemic claims are being made.

CA per se pays a great deal of attention to linguistic expressions, as language is considered to be the means by which social actions are organized. However, linguistic formats have not only been part of the analysis, but have also, in some sense, formed the point of departure for all the studies. For example, as mentioned above, the use of specific terms has been investigated (Study II), as has the function of a particular verb, *känna* ‘feel’ (in Study V). Study IV investigates sequences from performance appraisal interviews in which a particular question from the interview guide is posed and responded to. The study shows how alterations (linguistic and paralinguistic) made to the original question result in responses expressing different actions. Study III focuses on the interactional management of the topic of stress, while Study I partly targets pronoun use, in particular the use of ‘I’ and ‘we’, as the students construct subgroups within the larger student group. Overall, the studies illustrate how different linguistic expressions create possibilities, restrictions and limitations for the speakers.

1.3 Aims

The scope of this study is interaction in two institutional settings: university tutorials and performance appraisal interviews. Focusing on these settings, the principal aim of the thesis is to investigate *how institutional agendas are talked into being, and what types of institutional norms are both constructed and displayed by the participants in these contexts*. With this focus, the constituent studies aim to develop our understanding of social organization in these particular institutional settings, as well as to contribute to the growing body of studies of interaction in institutional settings (e.g. Schegloff 1988/89; Tracy 1997; Clayman & Heritage 2002; Waring 2002a, 2002b; Sandlund 2004; Benwell & Stokoe 2005 [2004]; Stivers 2007). Translated into research questions, these broader aims read:

1. How do speakers accomplish, manage and negotiate institutional norms; and how do such norms constitute a frame for the interaction?
2. How do institutional features of the interaction impact the interaction in general and the sequential trajectory in particular?
In the early stages of analysis, it became evident that participants recurrently managed knowledge and entitlement through different interactional resources. Furthermore, they performed stance-taking and/or displayed contextually relevant identities. For that reason, the data also raised the following sub-questions (reflected in themes A and B in the previous section):

3. How do participants make relevant the dimension of rights and knowledge in these institutional contexts; and what are the consequences for the interaction?
4. Through what interactional resources do participants accomplish stance-taking; and in some cases, how are contextually relevant identities made relevant?

None of the five studies aims to answer all four of the above questions. Questions 1 and 2 run through all the studies, but questions 3 and 4 are only addressed in some of them.

Besides exploring how speakers accomplish, manage and negotiate ‘institutionality’ and institutional norms, the studies raise methodological issues such as how CA can be used to uncover restrictions and limitations in interaction and, in a wider sense, to say something about the context. The ethnomethodological approach presupposes a dynamic interaction between the micro and the macro level, and CA offers tools for systematically documenting contextual constraints on the local organization of talk.

In sum, the present thesis aims to broaden our understanding of ‘institutionality’ in talk in two institutional settings. The focus is on linguistic resources, as language is considered to be the primary means for managing social encounters.

1.4 Outline

This introductory part of the thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the background to CA, before moving on to discuss some of its key concepts: preference, alignment/affiliation and stance-taking.

The following chapter (3) describes previous research on institutional interactions of a similar kind (i.e. in educational and organizational settings), as well as studies relating to the topics examined in this thesis. The systematic investigation of institutional interaction is discussed, using Heritage (1997) as a backdrop. Heritage’s discussion of asymmetries is further developed in relation to a recent publication by Stivers et al. (2011) on knowledge and entitlement. Chapter 3 also gives an account of research into institutional identities.

Chapter 4 presents the data studied, including data collection procedures, transcription conventions and ethical considerations.
Chapter 5 summarizes the five studies, and the last chapter (6) brings the different studies together by discussing the results in relation to institutionality in general and to knowledge, entitlement, stance and linguistic expression in particular. This final chapter offers examples from the studies and elaborates on the construction and reproduction of institutional norms. Finally, the contribution and implications of the present work are discussed, including suggestions for further research on some of the key topics.
2 Theory and method intertwined

This chapter summarizes the theoretical and methodological framework of Conversation Analysis, which originated in the 1960s in California with the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. There are a great many books and articles describing the principles and development of CA (e.g. Atkinson & Heritage 1984; Goodwin & Heritage 1990; Psathas 1995; Pomerantz & Fehr 1997; Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998; Lindström 1999; Steensig 2001; Lerner 2004; Sandlund 2004; Arminen 2005; Schegloff 2007). This chapter gives a brief overview of the development of the field, with an emphasis on the ethnomethodological heritage. Section 2.2 describes basic principles of CA, in particular that of sequential organization. Following this are two sections on preference and alignment/affiliation – three frequent analytic terms within the CA literature. Although these are not specifically addressed subjects of investigation in the studies making up this thesis, they are central terms for CA analysts as they provide analytic tools for understanding and describing participants’ actions. Section 2.2.3 summarizes the concept of stance, which is strongly connected to dis/alignment and dis/affiliation.

2.1 Sociological origins

Many have pointed out that the late 1950s and the 1960s were revolutionary times in the field of sociology (e.g. Heritage 1984; Drew & Wootton 1988a; Goodwin & Heritage 1990; Cromdal 2000; Sandlund 2004). Two of the most influential sociologists to develop new theories that would prove major influences on the emergence of CA were Harold Garfinkel and Erving Goffman.

The first of these, Harold Garfinkel, developed a sociological approach called ethnomethodology. Its focus is on the achievement and display of intersubjectivity: that is, how is mutual understanding (most often) achieved by people as they speak? An attendant question could be: how is it that people do not have to start from the very beginning every time they talk? Some kind of common ground seems to be established, and Garfinkel was interested in understanding how participants appeared to make use of various procedures for “practical common-sense reasoning” (Heritage 1987). Formulating the core of the methodology, Garfinkel (1967:11) states that he uses
the term “ethnomethodology” [quotes in original] to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life.

This dense quote states a number of assumptions that characterize ethnomethodology. First, as the approach aims to examine how people establish mutual understanding, it implies that mutual understanding is visible in interaction, and hence possible to delimit and investigate. Secondly, mutual understanding is considered to be acquired through the use of language and other social actions. These practices are in turn treated as “rational”, which in an ethnomethodological context means that they are clear and unproblematic to the people using them. Thirdly, the activity of accomplishing mutual understanding is considered to be recurrent: that is, when we interact with each other we do this over and over. In addition, a prominent feature of the methodology which the quote does not reveal is that language and social actions should be examined as they occur in situ. Nothing but thorough delving into the practices that furnish social interaction can reveal how we create consensus as we interact.

Garfinkel’s approach emerged as a reaction against theories launched by his teacher Talcott Parsons, professor of sociology at Harvard. What might be referred to as the ‘Parsonian perspective’ is a view of mutual understanding as something ‘that is just there’: existing without any effort by the speakers. Furthermore, by sociologists as well as linguists at the time, the actual talk and engagement taking place in authentic communication were considered systematically unmanageable. Their disorderliness blocked from view what the analyst should really be focusing on: the ideal structure(s) of language. Garfinkel argued that this latter perspective disregarded the actual procedures by which people establish mutual understanding, meaning and common sense. Intersubjectivity is not a product of given conditions, but rather the subject of investigation itself. Garfinkel also proposed a new view of context. Instead of being treated as something that has an obvious effect on whatever is going on, context should be viewed as something that interplays with the interlocutors and the ongoing interaction. (Goodwin & Heritage 1990.)

Erving Goffman shared with Garfinkel a dynamic view of interaction and context, and he also placed mundane social interaction at the centre of attention, as he considered interaction to be the vehicle of social life. Goffman’s collected work, however, cannot be given a homogeneous label in the same way as Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology. His publications deal with a variety of aspects of human interaction, such as face work. Goffman’s overall aim was to describe the general organization of face-to-face interaction, and he introduced various models and concepts to explain this, e.g. the dramaturgic perspective on interaction, the interaction order, frame analysis and footing.
(Goffman 1981, 1982, 1983, 1986 [1974]; see e.g. Drew & Wootton 1988b for an overview). Here I will summarize frame and footing, as they are closely related, and as the concept of footing is referred to in several of the studies in this thesis.

The concept of frame refers to how speakers in a particular setting display the way they define the current situation. Through various means employed in interaction, participants recurrently “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences” (Goffman 1986 [1974]:21). These “occurrences” may imply virtually anything, and they demonstrate the members’ understandings of, approaches to and perspectives on a particular situation. This rather abstract line of argument aims to describe the interplay between the local and the broader context; a single action by the speaker mirrors the expectations that s/he might have regarding the frame characterizing the situation.

Goffman recognized that a particular frame may not be constant throughout longer stretches of talk between speakers. For that reason, he introduced the concept of footing to describe how participants move between frames. The core of this concept is that it displays a speaker’s alignment or stance as projected in shorter extracts of the talk, such as sentences or shorter units, and the change may be more or less obvious or subtle (1981:128). Goffman specifies that a change in footing usually involves sound markers such as “pitch, volume, rhythm, stress, tonal quality” (loc. cit.). This reveals that the development of footing was inspired to a large degree by Gumperz’s principles of code switching, which mark shifts by means of linguistic variation (Goffman 1981:127).

Gumperz later developed the code-shifting principles into what have become known as contextualization cues. These aim to demonstrate how “lexical, prosodic, phonological, and syntactic choices” indicate how the speakers interpret and comprehend certain aspects of the context (Drew & Heritage 1992:8). The meanings of footing and contextualization cues overlap to a large extent, but the approaches to language differ. Goffman was more philosophical and abstract in his line of argument, whereas Gumperz sought to be more concrete and to refer to specific linguistic behaviour.⁴ Given the high level of abstraction in Goffman’s reasoning, footing is not applied as an analytical model in the thesis as a whole, but is introduced occasionally when the emphasis is on the stance of participants.

Both Garfinkel and Goffman developed theoretical models for approaching the micro level of interaction. Ethnomethodology and concepts such as

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⁴ Levinson, however, argues that the Goffmanian concept of footing plays a central role for linguists for several reasons, one being that it targets deixis (referring to indexicality), which is related to how “utterances are semantically or pragmatically anchored to their situation of utterance” (1988:163).
framing and footing have had a major influence on the development of CA, which is described in the next section.

2.2 Conversation Analysis – basic principles

The theories developed by Garfinkel and Goffman promoted a shift in focus from grand theories on social order, to how social life is organized in practice. Harvey Sacks, a former student of Goffman’s who also had been collaborating with Garfinkel, still found these theories abstract. He set off to develop an analytic approach, which came to be labelled Conversation Analysis. The term is, however, not doing its content justice, as the somewhat narrow ‘conversation’ does not cover the intended focus:

It is not conversation but talk-in-interaction that is the broader and more inclusive characterization of the phenomena of study. Interaction analysis would perhaps be an even more appropriate term because all aspects of interaction, nonverbal and nonvocal, are also amenable to study, but this would be to claim perhaps too vast a territory. (Psathas 1995:2, italics in original.)

One reason why ‘conversation’ initially found its way into the name is probably the early focus on proving the existence of and describing an organization of actions and procedures in mundane social interaction, in contrast to the previously prevailing notion of ‘disorderly talk’ (cf. Chomsky 1957). However, in the early days a considerable number of studies within the field focused on talk-in-interaction in institutional settings (e.g. Sacks’s lectures, found in Sacks 1992).

Sacks developed the ideas that evolved into CA in the lectures he gave at UCLA at Irvine between 1964 and 1972. In these lectures, he demonstrated how close examination of talk can reveal the way in which interlocutors manage a myriad of social actions; how they appear to be organized, and how they constantly orient to different sets of actions and categories. CA objected to the earlier studies of isolated sentences, as people always have access to a broader context as they speak, both in terms of sentences and turns, and in terms of the setting (Goodwin & Heritage 1990). Through numerous examples from actual conversations – in particular from the Suicide Prevention Centre at which he had been a research fellow in 1963–64 – Sacks showed that human interaction is highly organized. Turns of talk are to be regarded as units that are available as subjects of investigation, in particular when “addressing the organization of mind, culture and interaction” (Sacks 1992:xii).

5 The lectures were recorded and transcribed, but were not published until 1992 (Sacks 1992). The introductory chapter to that book, written by Emanuel A. Schegloff, describes the early development of CA.
What was to be the initial analytic innovation was the concept of interac-
tional sequences (Schegloff 1968; Sacks 1987 [1973]), and in particular the
identification of adjacency pairs (Sacks 1992). The latter were an item that
could be delimited in the ‘stream of talk’, proving that talk was a normative-
ly organized activity

whose central characteristics is the rule that a current action (a “first pair
part” such as a greeting or a question) requires the production of a reciprocal
action (or “second pair part”) at the first possible opportunity after the com-
pletion of the first (Goodwin & Heritage 1990:287).

The adjacency pair concept was, furthermore, found to be applicable to
longer stretches of talk, which made it a fruitful vehicle for delimiting and
describing the development of activities such as topic organization, troubles
telling (e.g. Jefferson 1988) and advice giving (e.g. Jefferson & Lee 1981).

Early studies in the field examined sequential organization, such as the
structure of openings in telephone calls (Schegloff 1968), the “technical
basis” for closing a conversation (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), and how speak-
ers display preferences for agreement and contiguity (Sacks 1987 [1973]). A
particularly seminal paper is the one on the sequential organization of turn-
taking by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974). At the time, this paper was
probably seen as a contribution to the debate about what Chomsky saw as
the degenerate nature of actual talk (Goodwin & Heritage 1990), as it
demonstrated that overlap and simultaneous talk are not random, but rather
the consequence of the participants’ ability to identify possible places for turn transition, on the basis of turn constructional units (TCUs). The paper
gives an account of the speaker-selection techniques which participants in
interaction can employ, and also demonstrates how the organization of turn-
taking can be manipulated, for instance by giving a speaker maximum access
to the floor. These analytic units provided conversation analysts with tools
for making interactional inventories, as well as offering convincing evidence
of participants’ systematic deployment of recognizable techniques. By way
of example, Goodwin (1979, 1980) developed the understanding of turn
distribution and restart by demonstrating the strong orientation of partici-
pants to eye contact in order to proceed with talk.

Two recurring principles in the cited studies stemming from Garfinkel
and ethnomethodology are the assumptions of (1) the ‘members’ per-
spective’, and (2) every action being context-shaped and context-renewing
(Heritage 1984). Taking the ‘members’ perspective’ is an important premise
for the analysis: what participants treat as relevant is what the analyst should
treat as relevant. The analyst should not ascribe relevance to actions or cir-
cumstances to which the participants do not seem to pay any attention. The

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6 Floor is commonly used to refer to the interactional space which interlocutors furnish with
verbal, vocal, non-verbal and non-vocal actions.
second assumption has to do with expected contiguity. All actions are linked to one another, meaning that each and every action produced stems from a background of previous actions, at the same time as each and every action will add to that background and be part of the next action’s background.

Finally, CA considers the context to be “both a project and a product of the participants’ actions” (Heritage 1997). This means that it views asymmetries, for example, as a product of interaction – sequentially accomplished, negotiated and managed by the participants – rather than a model for explanation. The opposite of this perspective is sometimes referred to as the “bucket theory of context” (Goodwin & Heritage 1990:286), and implies that preset circumstances inherent in an institution impact, in one way or another, the interaction taking place in it. One example may be an assumption of power structures instituted in asymmetric relations, affecting the interaction between an institutional representative and a layperson.

2.2.1 Preference

The concept of preference concerns how turns and actions are related to each other. A turn/action can project either a preferred or a dispreferred response; and conversely, a response can be designed as either preferred or dispreferred. First of all, it is necessary to clarify that preference does not refer to the speaker’s intention. Rather, the concept as used in the CA literature relates to structures within a sequence, and to how certain turns appear to ‘invite’ or ‘prefer’ certain second turns. Schegloff (1988:453) states that there are at least two different usages of ‘preference’ in the literature. The first refers to properties of sequence types, in particular adjacency pairs and the relationship between their first pair part (FPP) and second pair part (SPP). Taking the FPP ‘offer’ as an example, the preferred SPP would be ‘acceptance’ and the dispreferred SPP would be ‘rejection’ (cf. Duranti 1997 for an overview of adjacency pairs). The other usage of preference puts the focus on how the responsive action is enacted, e.g. an acceptance can be done “as a preferred” (Schegloff 1988:453, italics in original). This type of preference does not concern the sequence structure, but rather “the side of practice” (loc. cit.). A simple example would be that an SPP is produced without delay and/or possible mitigating features such as *uhm* or *well*.

Levinson (1983:332–334) draws a parallel between preference and the linguistic concept of markedness. Drawing on Comrie (1976:111), Levinson compares preference with the unmarked form of a linguistic item, which is often chosen over other forms by a speaker because it is perceived as the most normal and usual, and at the same time the least specific. Transferred to preference structure, unmarkedness can then be seen as a property built into the FPP so that it structurally indicates what would be a preferred SPP. A question such as “You’re going, aren’t you?” is built to prefer a “yes” answer, whereas “You’re not going, are you?” is constructed for the preference
of a “no” answer (Schegloff 1988:453). This is further developed by Raymond (2003), who brings in new terminology and states that an SPP can be either type-conforming or nonconforming. A type-conforming response “conform[s] to the constraints embodied in the grammatical form of the FPP” (ibid., p. 946). An example of “embodied constraints” is given in Raymond’s Excerpt 1: “Did you get your garlic tablets?”7, where the construction [verb + subject + verb + X] projects a preference for ‘yes’.8

Further, Raymond (2003:947) concludes that speakers display a preference for type-conforming responses, based on three indications:

1. Type-conforming responses are far more frequent than nonconforming responses.
2. Type-conforming responses are treated as the default form.
3. The sequential consequences differ depending on whether the response is type-conforming or nonconforming.

These points correspond to Levinson’s suggested characteristics of dispreferred SPPs. For example, they are (a) often delayed, (b) sometimes initiated with repairs, and (c) often prefaced with markers such as well or uh. Both Levinson’s and Raymond’s observations make specific what Sacks (1987 [1973]:58) pointed out in general terms long ago:

[T]here is an apparent interaction between the preference for contiguity and the preference for agreement, such that, if an agreeing answer occurs, it pretty damn well occurs contiguously, whereas if a disagreeing answer occurs, it may well be pushed rather deep in to the turn that it occupies.

What Sacks pinpoints is the fact that it takes interactional effort to construct a dispreferred SPP. The design of the FPP projects a limited range of structurally suitable SPPs, and if a speaker needs to produce a dispreferred SPP, s/he has to make some interactional effort.

The second usage of preference, as already noted, concerns how the SPP is produced, or as Schegloff (1988:453) puts it: “the participants’ ways of doing or enacting a responsive activity”. A simplified way of putting this might be that this type of preference does not primarily focus on the structure of the turn, but rather on the activities accomplished and the interactional effort. Pomerantz has written extensively on how participants in interaction agree and disagree with assessments, and her line of argument is built on the notion of preference. One example of a preferred action in responsive position (SPP) is given in her frequently cited article from 1984 (p. 62):

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7 Simplified transcript of Excerpt 1 from Raymond (2003:942).
8 Provided that the utterance does not express self-deprecation (Pomerantz 1984).
In the first line, J produces an assessment. Action-wise, this assessment invites L to co-participate in praising a referent, the weather, which they both have access to. L proffers an upgraded assessment in return, which functions as an agreement. Pomerantz sketches numerous examples, leading to the conclusion that (a) speakers display a preference for agreement and (b) assessment sequences can be a locus in interaction where preference is displayed.

What is also evident in Pomerantz’s example is that J offers a candidate answer, that is, beautiful is offered as a possible description. The candidate answer offered to someone “provides a model to the recipient of what type of information would satisfy the speaker’s purpose” (Pomerantz 1988:366). This further illustrates preference at an action level, as it signals to the recipient what type of answer would satisfy the speaker who initially offers a candidate answer.

2.2.2 Alignment and affiliation

The concept of preference was introduced by Sacks in 1971 (see Sacks 1992:xxxiii) and has been a pervasive concept for conversation analysts seeking to understand the relationships between turns in interaction. Lately, scholars have tried to develop this understanding further, and the terms dis/alignment and dis/affiliation are gaining ground. If preference focuses on the relationship between utterances, dis/alignment and dis/affiliation pinpoint the dynamic aspect of this relationship by explaining how dis/aligning and dis/affiliative actions are designed and accomplished.

A thorough account of what dis/alignment and dis/affiliation mean is given by Stivers (2008). She focuses on how the terms can be used to explain how recipients of storytelling design their responses (both verbally and non-verbally). When somebody tells a story, s/he employs various resources in order to convey his or her stance towards what is being told. This means that the teller’s perspective, and hence preference for how the story should be interpreted, is built into the story by various means. For example, the teller might start with a story preface, or make use of vocal means such as prosody in order to enact parts of the story being told (cf. Holt 2007). A recipient might produce tokens such as mm, uh huh yeah – denoted “continuers”, “acknowledgements” and “generic responses” in previous studies (Stivers 2008:34). However, Stivers suggests that, in the storytelling context at least, such tokens might be considered to accomplish alignment, as they deal with

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A response may be a second pair part (SPP) in an adjacency pair, but may also be of a freer character in relation to previous utterances.
the *structural* project of telling a story, or as Stivers (loc. cit., italics in original) puts it:

When a recipient *aligns* with a telling, he or she supports the structural asymmetry of the storytelling activity: that a storytelling is in progress and the teller has the floor until story completion.

Hence, when a speaker produces tokens of alignment, s/he approves of the project in progress. Stivers et al. (2011) develop this definition by adding that alignment conceptualizes the “structural level of cooperation” (ibid., p. 21). That cooperation has a structural level implies that it is organized and expressed through different linguistic items. Further, it highlights the fact that cooperation is an ongoing active process, something that is achieved between speakers. Steensig (2012) stresses that speakers always have an ambition of achieving flow and progress in interaction, as “alignment is relevant after virtually every interactional contribution”. Alignment is, so to speak, the ‘default’ in interaction.

*Affiliation*, on the other hand, concerns how the recipient of a story “displays support and endorses the teller’s conveyed stance” (Stivers 2008:35). With affiliative actions, the recipient of a story supports what is being told, as affiliation concerns the social rather than the structural level. Stivers et al. (2011) propose that affiliation is concerned with “the affective level of cooperation” (ibid., p. 21), meaning that affiliative responses “match the prior speaker’s evaluative stance, display empathy and/or cooperate with the preference of the prior action” (loc. cit.). Steensig (2012) adds that while aligning actions may be relevant at almost any point in interaction, affiliative actions are made relevant after utterances that express a speaker’s stance or project a preference for a specific action.

The above definitions of alignment and affiliation provide conversation analysts with useful tools for describing how conversations appear to be successful or not. However, as Steensig (2012) states, simply pointing out dis/aligning and dis/affiliative actions is not an end in itself. Instead, the analysis has to be sequentially grounded, and must seek to illustrate how participants in interaction do, or do not, accomplish social cooperation.

### 2.2.3 Stance-taking as an activity in interaction

Stivers (2008), Stivers et al. (2011) and Steensig (2012) all state that affiliative actions respond to some type of *stance* expressed in a previous utterance. According to Englebretson (2007), however, defining stance is no easy task. The concept, which is related to *modality, evaluation, affect, subjectivity* and *epistemics*, is operationalized differently by different researchers. Traditionally, within the field of linguistics, specific items in language, such as adverbs or verbs, have been investigated, as they have been assumed to
express the speaker’s stance or perspective (for overviews see e.g. Kärkkäinen 2003; Haddington 2005; Englebretson 2007). This approach makes a clear connection between the subjective qualities of a linguistic item and the mind of the speaker, consequently isolating the speaker and the utterance from a context. Words are primarily semantic, and the choice between A or B reflects an internal psychological state of the speaker. Kärkkäinen (2006:700) argues that this approach overlooks the social aspect of language use, and suggests that:

stance is not primarily situated within the minds of individual speakers, but rather emerges from dialogic interaction between interlocutors in particular dialogic and sequential contexts. Thus, stance is more properly viewed from an intersubjective vantage point, rather than being regarded as a primarily subjective dimension of language.

The intersubjective vantage point stresses interaction as the primordial site of stance-taking, meaning that stance is not “born” in the mind of a speaker and expressed via talk; rather, it is “born” in interaction and shaped through and by the interactional contributions. This means, for instance, that a verb with apparent subjective features, such as think, does not automatically express something of a subjective character. Rather, it should be treated like other lexical choices – as an interactional resource by means of which speakers can accomplish stance-taking. Stance is not a product – stance-taking is an active process.

To illustrate the intersubjective quality of stance-taking, Du Bois (2007:163) has developed a model called the stance triangle. As illustrated by Figure 1 below, stance-taking is understood to be a “tri-act activity” (ibid., p. 162). Subject₁ and Subject₂ interact and talk about Object, which may be, for example, a person or an event. The triangle emphasizes that nothing is one-way, meaning that the subjects have to orient to each other as well as to the object during the course of the interaction, and at the same time the object is accessible (in some sense, cf. Section 3.1.1) to both the subjects. This underlines the dynamic, i.e. intersubjective, aspect of stance-taking.
How participants in interaction orient towards the principles illustrated in the stance triangle has been shown by Kärkkäinen (2003, 2006, 2007). She paid specific attention to a linguistic item that looks highly subjective, the construction *I think*, and found that the phrase can be employed to accomplish various actions. Kärkkäinen found it to be used in a routinized manner in order to (1) mark a boundary in interaction and/or (2) bring in a speaker’s perspective. The phrase may also (3) be used to accomplish “strategic interactional work” (2003:146) when speakers are dealing with issues that may be face-threatening. Lastly (4), *I think* may signal turn completion and elicit a response from the co-participants present (ibid., pp. 161–175). The variety of functions that *I think* is shown to assume underlines the relevance of an intersubjective approach when studying subjective-featured linguistic items (cf. Karlsson 2006).

Returning to the definition of stance as a concept, Englebretson (2007:6) offers five “key conceptual principles of stance”:

1. There are three levels of stance-taking, often intertwined – “stance is physical action, stance is personal attitude/belief/evaluation, and stance is social morality” (loc. cit.).
2. Stance is public and perceivable, which makes it detectable to other speakers as well as to the analyst.
3. It is of an interactional nature, meaning that it is constructed in collaboration between speakers.
4. Stance is indexical, meaning that it evokes, for example, a sociocultural framework.

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10 The stance triangle is reprinted with permission from John W. Du Bois.
5. Stance is consequential, meaning that it invokes responsibilities which speakers may be held accountable for (cf. Section 3.1.1 on knowledge, entitlement and morality).

Englebretson’s points unpack and specify the action of taking stance so that it becomes accessible and possible to investigate. Owing to its applicability, this approach has been used in the present thesis to investigate how participants take stance in the data.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the background to CA and summarized some of its core features. It is important to stress that doing close analysis of short extracts of talk is not automatically ‘doing CA’. The method has a built-in theory, based on an ethnomethodological perspective that sees interaction as a weave of threads, growing and taking shape with each interactional contribution. Speakers might go in with a certain number of threads and colours, but the final pattern or shape will depend on the various alternatives made available at specific points in the sequencing of the interaction. As numerous studies within this field have concluded, speakers orient to specific orders in interaction, meaning that certain actions and also certain linguistic constructions are more common than others, as well as being treated as interactionally somewhat less complicated.

Dis/preference, dis/alignment and dis/affiliation are analytic tools for describing and understanding the relationships between utterances in interaction. However, they describe slightly different levels, as dis/preference focuses on the structural relationship between sequence parts, whereas dis/alignment and dis/affiliation are concerned with the participants’ commitment regarding interactional activity and stance. Further, the intersubjective perspective on the activity of stance-taking supplies the researcher with a frame for investigating social positioning. The close investigation of smaller units of language aims to explore by what mechanisms people manage to make interaction work – as well as to disentangle how and when it does not work.
3 Interaction in institutional settings

The specific institutional contexts investigated in this thesis are university tutorials (also referred to as seminars\(^{11}\) by the participants in the data), and performance appraisal interviews (PAIs) from a medium-sized corporation within the financial sector. Before moving on to an account of previous studies of interaction in these particular contexts (3.2), I will review a number of studies investigating features of talk that can be characterized as ‘institutional’, and how these features can be located in interaction.

3.1 The systematic study of ‘institutionality’

Many CA studies have focused on describing interaction in different institutional settings. Examples of such settings are banks and universities, but not all interactions taking place within those institutions are institutional. Conversely, institutional interactions can take place outside the physical environment of an organization or institution. Drew & Heritage (1992:22) propose three features that may characterize ‘institutional talk’:

1. At least one of the participants displays an orientation to some goal, task or identity related to the specific institution.
2. The participants orient to special and particular constraints regarding what are treated as allowable interactional contributions.
3. Different institutional contexts are associated with different inferential frameworks and procedures, which the participants make relevant.

Each institution is distinguished by specific combinations of these points, or ‘fingerprints’ specific to the particular institution concerned (Heritage & Greatbatch 1991:95–96). These fingerprints are often implemented into the

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\(^{11}\) ‘Seminar’ is a common and frequently used label for gatherings between teacher and students at Swedish universities that are designed to achieve some level of interaction. Many courses, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, are based on a mix of ‘lectures’ and ‘seminars’, the latter including various forms of teaching, e.g. tutorials. I have chosen to refer in English to this set of data as ‘tutorials’. At Swedish universities, ‘seminar’ is used to denote the tutorials recorded for my studies, as well as graduate seminars and many things in between.
institution in the form of various routines, which may be quite simple for representatives of the institution to identify, while they may be “experienced as constraining and irksome” by those unfamiliar with the institution (Heritage 1997:225). As a basis for identifying these fingerprints, six systematic features that can function as tools for the researcher were first suggested in Drew & Heritage (1992), and then further developed in Heritage (1997). I will summarize these here, drawing on Heritage (1997).

1. The **turn-taking organization** may reveal constraints which characterize an institution (Sacks et al. 1974). Sometimes interactions in institutional settings employ the same turn-taking organization as ordinary conversations, but alterations of this system may also be recruited, which can open up different opportunities for action. Taking the classroom as an example, the teacher may distribute the floor so that only certain views and opinions are expressed. Lindström (2011) has investigated classroom interaction and argues that, in this setting, the teacher may promote or restrict different standpoints, which could result in a certain moral perspective being given priority. An even more obvious example of institutional interaction in which restrictions are invoked is the courtroom (e.g. Atkinson & Drew 1979). In sum, the turn-taking system may be deployed in order to restrict a particular party’s opportunity to speak.

2. To get an overview of the course of interaction, the researcher needs to locate an **overall structural organization**. This may make clear “phases and sections”, which can help to identify goal and task orientations. It may also help to make visible co-construction by the participants. Heritage points out that “shapeless” and/or messy sections may indicate the participants’ different orientations. (Heritage 1997:227–230.)

3. The **sequence organization** is the next level that can be studied in order to reveal institutional presence. Heritage (ibid., pp. 230–231) gives an example from a telephone call in which a school employee calls a pupil’s parents in order to ask about his whereabouts during the day, as he has been missing from class. It turns out that the boy has been ill, and the mother’s answer to the school employee’s question contains a lengthy account of why she did not report him sick. Heritage argues that the mother’s account makes relevant institutional expectations which the mother has not fulfilled: that is, she did not report the boy sick earlier that day. The development of a sequence thus illustrates the participants’ orientation to institutional norms.

4. **Turn design**. The turns that make up a sequence may be designed in various ways in order to perform different actions. This is the first level of investigation regarding turn design, while the second focuses on the means selected for this purpose. Returning to the telephone call from the school employee, Heritage examines the question: “Was Martin home from school ill today?” He argues that this question provides an example of an “institutional piece of question design” (1997:234), as it suggests a reason for a potential absence, and one that is legitimate. The question prefers a ‘yes’
response, but a ‘no’ response does not immediately hold the parent(s) responsible. Heritage suggests that recurrent institutional questions posed by institutional representatives have undergone a “wind tunnel experiment” over time (loc. cit.). This means that the questions, like the one in the example, are designed to evoke the least resistance. The school employee has most likely met with arguments when calling parents, and her experience has made her, consciously or unconsciously, alter her questions.

5. The layer of interaction that might be the easiest to identify is the **lexical choices** made by the participants. Numerous studies show how speakers select words and phrases that “are fitted to the institutional setting” (Heritage 1997:235). Different terminologies belong in different institutions, and varying knowledge and access to particular terms can distinguish different speakers’ familiarity with the institution in question (cf. e.g. Femø Nielsen 2009). But there can also be a level of lexical choice that does not appear to imply institutionality as obviously as, for example, medical terminology. As was first observed by Sacks, institutional representatives may refer to themselves as ‘we’ when they speak as members of the organization. This ‘we’ invokes the institution’s perspective and reduces the speaker’s self, or ‘I’ (Heritage 1997:235).

6. The last of the six points listed by Heritage concerns **interactional asymmetries**, and these are broken down into four subcategories. First, there are asymmetries of **participation**. Heritage draws on Linell & Luckmann’s work (1991), which questions the existence of the alternative: can there be **symmetry** in interaction? On a micro level, all interactions are asymmetric, as (at least) one of the participants has the advantage of having initiated local activities such as a question/answer sequence. However, in institutional settings, this type of prerogative may be reserved for the institutional representative. Taking the doctor’s office as an example, it is usually the doctor who asks the questions, and who has the authority to initiate closings of phases, as well as of the meeting. This is usually not the case in ordinary conversation. (Heritage 1997.)

Second, Heritage talks about asymmetries of **interactional and institutional “knowhow”** (ibid., p. 237). These relate to the participants’ experiences of the institution, and the way one member may enter an encounter professionally and the other privately. To refer once again to the telephone call from the school employee, the employee is making a routine phone call as part of her profession, whereas the mother receives the call as a private person (loc. cit.). The phone call from the school also illustrates that the actual location is of less importance, as in this case the institutional interaction takes place over the phone.

The third subcategory involves **epistemological caution and asymmetries of knowledge**. A certain level of caution is often exercised in institutional interactions such as courtrooms and news interviews. This asymmetry is then negotiated and re-established, as the layperson is commonly
careful about using terminology associated with the institution, and the institutional representative may be cautious when presenting facts. A continuation of this is the (re)establishment of the “hidden agenda” (Heritage 1997:239), where for example the doctor asks a set of questions which the patient cannot link together and ultimately may interpret as disconnected.

Finally, Heritage talks about rights of access to knowledge. Having knowledge may not always be the key; what may be more important is how that knowledge has been obtained. As one may be held morally accountable for certain knowledge, it may be risky to reveal knowledge, for example if it has been acquired through gossip (Heritage 1997:239). On the other hand, it may not be enough to possess knowledge acquired legitimately (i.e. not through gossip). In the doctor’s office, medical expertise is reserved for the institutional representative. Heritage reports a study in which doctors taking their children to paediatric consultations put their own expertise on hold in favour of the attending physician. Hence, a certain entitlement to the knowledge seems to be made relevant by speakers in institutional interaction (ibid., p. 240). The negotiation of rights of access to knowledge is also the topic of a recent collection of papers on epistemics in interaction (Stivers et al. 2011), to which I will return in the next section.

Points 5 and 6 on Heritage’s list – lexical choice and interactional asymmetries – are of particular importance for the studies conducted for this thesis. To give a couple of examples, lexical choices are a recurrent topic, as pronoun use is frequently discussed in the analyses of most of my empirical studies. Study I has a particular focus on this, analysing the use of ‘we’ to construct subgroups within the larger student group, and its consequences. Further, Study V investigates a particular verb, känna ‘feel’, and how this organizes various functions.

The last of Heritage’s points concerns a more abstract dimension of interactions: asymmetries relating specifically to knowledge, access and entitlement. As noted above, the use of ‘we’ might have consequences, as making statements on behalf of a group may or may not be sanctioned. Claiming authority as a spokesperson implies common ground and shared access to events or knowables (cf. Study I).

As both the distribution of knowledge and the management of entitlement are recurrent and central themes in the studies conducted, I will continue by summarizing some key investigations in this field.

3.1.1 The management of knowledge and entitlement in interaction

Knowledge, epistemics and entitlement are elaborated on by Stivers et al. (2011), who distinguish three “dimensions of knowledge in conversation”
First, *epistemic access* concerns how speakers display knowledge versus lack of knowledge, how certain they are about something, the source of the knowledge and the aspect of directness of the knowledge. Research has shown that participants in interaction generally know fairly well what their co-participants know and do not know (loc. cit.). Consequently, speakers’ expectations of their co-participants’ level of knowledge are reflected, for example, in requests for information (where a recipient is treated as knowing) and news announcements (where the recipient is treated as not knowing). Studies have also shown that speakers are careful about making claims when they suspect co-participants have better access to/ knowledge of some state of affairs (Heritage & Raymond 2005), just as they avoid designing a turn as a news announcement to someone they suspect already knows (Goodwin 1979). Pre-announcements such as “Did you hear X” (Schegloff 2007) thus function as a device for probing the circumstances before telling the actual news.

A second dimension is *epistemic primacy*. If the first organizes different levels of knowledge, this one places factual knowledge in relation to other subjects who might lodge equal information. What are the relative rights to know and claim that a speaker may have at a particular point in ongoing interaction, and what relative authority regarding specific knowledge can be held by a speaker? Heritage & Raymond (2005:18) give an example from a conversation in which Bea and Norma, two friends, have recently met a long-standing female acquaintance of Bea’s. Norma says: “She seems such a nice little lady”¹² to Bea, who in turn upgrades Norma’s assessment with “Awfully nice little person” (cf. L’s turn in the example from Pomerantz regarding the weather, Section 2.2.1). Heritage & Raymond argue that Norma downgrades her assessment with the evidential verb “seem”, in order to avoid making claims that she is not entitled to. As Norma has only met Bea’s friend once, Bea has “epistemic priority” over Norma (Heritage & Raymond 2005:18). In terms of primacy, Norma orients to the possibility that Bea is the one with a superior right to know and claim. A different side of the same coin suggests that certain news should be distributed “in order of relational closeness” (Stivers et al. 2011:14). This means, for instance, that telling your parents you are getting married before you tell your best friend implies that your parents are given epistemic primacy over your friend. As Stivers et al. state, breaches in this order may have major social consequences.

Thirdly, Stivers et al. elaborate on *epistemic responsibility*. This dimension deals with how knowledge is handled. Stivers et al. invoke Pomerantz’s (1980) Type 1 and Type 2 knowables. Type 1 concerns knowables which a speaker may not only have access to and relative rights to know, but also be expected and have a responsibility to know. One’s name is an example of this, as are one’s feelings. Type 2 comprises occasioned knowables, related

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¹² Simplified transcript quoted here.
to specific circumstances. For instance, if I have been to Dubai on vacation, I am likely to be held responsible for some knowledge about the place; at least about the weather during that specific period of time.\textsuperscript{13}

As the overview by Stivers et al. shows, the management of knowledge is far from simply a matter of formulating and displaying ‘facts’. Rather, knowables are recurrently related to some kind of ‘ownership’, hence bringing rights and responsibilities into play. Since we might be held, and hold others, accountable not only for what we know, but also for how we know it, knowledge can be considered to be “morally ordered” (Stivers et al. 2011:3). It is important to stress that ‘morality’ in this sense does not imply what is ethically right or wrong, as in terms of moral reasoning. Rather, it is viewed as the participants’ display of, first, what is treated as knowledge, and second, the accepted way(s) of managing (this) knowledge. However, Stivers et al. argue that the micro-level moral order in conversation and macro-level moral reasoning should not be seen as completely unrelated, but rather “as cut from the same cloth” (ibid.). This can be understood in the light of the examples given above, where speakers orient to potential accounts and explanations if they depart from local preferences.

The omnipresence of morality in interaction is also described by Bergmann (1998:280):

Morality is such a common and intrinsic quality of everyday social interaction that it is usually invisible to us, like glasses that provide a sharp sight of the area beyond although they themselves remain unseen.

Bergmann takes storytelling as an example. If it were not for a moral ‘core’, no story would be constructed, let alone remembered and reproduced. Loading stories or other utterances with morality is possible since we always have a choice when making formulations. We always choose a stance or perspective, even if the topic itself is ‘unloaded’ in moral terms. Other topics are societal loci of moralization, such as sexuality, lifestyles, religious beliefs and death. Topics such as these are often handled delicately in interaction, which, ironically, may make the event even more delicate, embarrassing and morally dubious (Bergmann 1998). Morality can therefore be seen as connected to knowledge, as a dimension affecting how knowables are handled in interaction.

3.1.2 Contextually relevant identities

Terms such as institutional representative, the professional and the layperson have been used interchangeably in the sections above. One way of treating identities is to view them as tied to the discourse as well as to the

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. B-event, Labov & Fanshel (1977:100).
situation, as Zimmerman (1998) suggests. Discourse identities “are integral to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction” (ibid., p. 90), and examples are current speaker, current listener, storyteller, story recipient, questioner, answerer, repair initiator etc. They are directly linked to the sequential organization and the current interactional activity. This means that they shift not only throughout the interaction, but also in the course of a given sequence. However, the identity that is relevant in relation to the context is the situational one. This is determined by the context in which a participant may be the doctor, patient, call taker of an emergency call, student, manager etc. To illustrate how this type of identity can be located and argued to have relevance for the interaction, I will quote an example from Zimmerman (1998), taken from a call to an emergency number in the United States:


1 CT: Mid-City police an fire
2 ((background noise and music on the line))
3 C: (YA::H) Thiz iz thuh (     ) ((voice is very slurred))
4 (1.5) ((loud background noise))
5 CT: Hello:? 
6 (0.4)
7 C: YEA::H?
8 CT: Wadidja want’?
9 (0.5)
10 C: Yea::h we we wan’ forn’ca:y (h) heh
11 (0.6) ((background voices, noise))
12 → CT: ‘Bout wha::t?
13 (5.3)
14 ((noise, voice: ‘hey gimme dat. . .’))
15 C: Hay=I’ve=uh ri:ddle for ya::
16 (0.3)
17 CT: HU:::H?
18 C: I have uh ri:ddle for ya
19 (0.3)
20 → CT: I don’t have ti:me f’r riddles=do-ya wanna squa:d’ro:n::t=
21 (0.4) ((loud music)) Wha’ fucks n leaks
22 like uh ti:ger,
23 (0.2)
24 CT: HU:H?
25 C: What fucks an leaks like uh ti:ger,
26 Huh? ((background noise))
27 CT: Good bye
28 C: Why::?
29 ((disconnect))

Normally, the call taker (CT) at the police is the complaint-taker, as the caller’s reason for making the call requires assistance. In this particular call, however, the caller is not in need of any assistance, but is instead trying to put forward a joke in the format of a question. This activity fails, as the call taker persistently orients to the relevant situated identities: that is, complaint-taker and complainant. In lines 21–22 the call taker refuses to be the recipi-
ent of a joke, and instead (once again) orients to the caller as the expected caller in this context: one who needs a police car. Zimmerman (1998:89) explains the breakdown of the call as follows:

Each party proposes a different footing for the call, that is, a different alignment of situated identities within which the sense and relevance of the exchange is to be understood and responded to.

Zimmerman’s example illustrates how identities can be located and grounded in the data without the participants explicitly uttering them. The call taker does not explicitly make relevant that the caller is not behaving in accordance with the frame, but through close examination of how the interaction evolves it is possible to argue that non-explicit but context-relevant identities come into play.

Two studies investigating the negotiation of identities in different educational settings within a university are Tracy (1997) and Benwell & Stokoe (2002, 2005 [2004]). Tracy investigated seminars at a department of a state university in the US, focusing on the discrepancy between what the participants formulated as overall goals of the seminars and what they expressed to be their own personal goals in presenting and participating in them. Whereas, as members of the department, they considered the seminars to be a forum for advanced academic discussions, they set somewhat more modest goals for their own participation: “not to fall over” or “drool”. In other words, a perceived institutional agenda was formulated, which was ascribed advanced demands concerning intellectual capacity. It is interesting that the worst-case scenario expressed by some members of the staff involved undesirable physical actions, as a direct counterpoint to the desired scholarly goals.

In contrast, British university students in Benwell & Stokoe’s data (2002, 2005 [2004]) displayed resistance to engaging in academic activities. In some of the examples, the students worked in groups with no teacher present. Some of these students displayed resistance to the tasks assigned, for instance by complaining about their purpose. They also policed each other’s use of relevant academic terms, as one student was accused of having “swallowed a dictionary” (Benwell & Stokoe 2002:447) as she used a correct scientific term. The authors argue that ‘doing education’ is not the equivalent of ‘doing being a student’, as the latter seems to socially reward an orientation to ‘averageness’.

14 Cf. Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA), see e.g. Stokoe (forthcoming) for an overview.
3.2 Previous research on similar data

The following sections outline earlier research on interaction in higher education and performance appraisal interviews.

3.2.1 Interaction in higher education

A large number of studies have investigated interaction in educational settings, using a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches (e.g. Mehan 1979; Seedhouse 2004). Studies drawing on CA have for example focused on children’s interaction in preschool or school-related settings (e.g. Björk-Willén 2006; Butler 2008; Melander 2009); bilingual children’s interaction (e.g. Cromdal 2000; Cekaite 2006); and interaction in different settings in compulsory school education (Sahlström 1999; Liljestrand 2002; Tholander 2002; Lindström 2011).

Studies drawing on data recorded in various higher education contexts include, for example, Benwell & Stokoe (2002, 2005 [2004]), Tracy (1997), Waring (2002a, 2002b) and Sandlund (2004). Waring’s data consists of recordings from a series of graduate seminars at a university in the United States. She examines ‘substantive recipiency’, which refers to communicative practices that speakers may deploy to indicate that they are following the ongoing discussion: “It involves demonstrating comprehension through the construction of candidate understandings” (Waring 2002a:454). Waring argues that these actions not only display an interactional device for indicating ‘I follow you’, but also demonstrate specific features of the seminar as a communicative context. As the practice of ‘substantive recipiency’ reformulates, extends and jargonizes previous utterances, it highlights the fact that the participants treat the seminar as a forum for developing, clarifying, specifying and explicating ideas.

Waring’s conclusion is reflected in interviewees’ answers presented by Tracy (1997). Members of a different department at a different university in the United States were interviewed regarding their participation in seminars in their home department. Tracy found the seminar setting to be dilemmatic for the participants. On the one hand, the seminars were considered to constitute a platform for the department’s overall activity, on the other, they were occasions during which participants had to act in line with what were perceived to be the institutional norms. Most of the interviewees expressed that what to say and how to say it were questions that they consciously contemplated during the seminars. Tracy’s study thus emphasizes the relationship between the construction of an institutional activity (the department seminar) and the participants’ perception of norms as reflected in the means of linguistic expression. Similarly, Benwell & Stokoe (2002, 2005 [2004]) shed light on how students and teacher interactionally construct various activities in higher education. The students’ resistance to numerous tasks dis-
plays both how institutional norms are constructed and how those norms are incorporated into the ongoing activity. (Further discussion of Tracy 1997 and Benwell & Stokoe 2002, 2005 [2004] can be found in Section 3.1.2.)

In a study on the interactional organization of affect and emotion, Sandlund (2004) used data from graduate school seminars at an American university. The analysis focuses three themes of particular interest from the data: ‘frustration’, ‘embarrassment’, and ‘enjoyment’, and Sandlund demonstrates how these emotions are systematically organized in interaction. The results are also related to the institutional context, as Sandlund notes that in particular the display of ‘frustration’ was found in sequences “highly constrained by local institutional norms” (ibid., p. 308). The task in some of the seminars was peer feedback to written texts by fellow students, and the author of the text was not allowed to respond to the feedback. The setup for this activity has a touch of academic socialization to it, as scrutiny of others’ work is a central activity in seminars. However, ‘frustration’ was often displayed as a result of critical feedback, particularly when authors of the text attempted to respond to the critical feedback with accounts and justifications and the teacher re-stated the local norms for turn-taking. In essence, the norm, i.e. that feedback recipients were to remain silent throughout the feedback sequence, was challenging to uphold locally as it violated a basic premise for turn-taking in interaction (that of providing a second pair part to a first pair part).

Although Sandlund’s focus was on affectivity/emotions in institutional interaction, her objective in using data from higher education resonates with my own interest in studying the negotiation of epistemics and social relations in academic talk-in-interaction:

Predominant institutional goals are related to the acquisition and production of knowledge, and the traditional dichotomy between reason/rationality and emotion/subjectivity has since long been embedded in academic practices (Sandlund 2004:101).

For the same reasons as are described by Sandlund, I initially set out to collect data from higher education, believing it to be an appropriate setting for studying stance-taking and the management of knowledge/entitlement. When I began working with the data from PAIs (see Section 4.1), I decided to include this data in the thesis project, as I found the two corpora to be similar in various ways and therefore to complement each other in relation to the overall aim of the thesis.

The next section will describe previous studies of PAIs and related institutional settings.
3.2.2 Performance appraisal interviews and workplace norms

The performance appraisal interview has received increased attention over the last few decades from scholars in various fields. A detailed overview is given in Study III (Sandlund et al. 2011), and in this section, therefore, I will confine myself to a brief outline of some key studies.

First, something needs to be said about the Swedish term medarbetar-samtal and its English counterpart performance appraisal interview. The English term expresses a focus on the topic of the interview – the employee’s performance – whereas the Swedish term focuses on the participants, translating literally as ‘co-worker conversation’. One likely reason for the different labels is Swedish working life legislation and the trade union movement, which have had a great impact on everyday workplace politics. Despite the different denotations, though, these planned meetings between a manager and an employee appear to share some core features:

- The topic(s) are determined in advance.
- There is an element of follow-up on the employee’s roles and tasks.
- There is a belief that these recurrent dialogues will lead to a positive outcome, not only for the manager and the employee, but also for the organization.

As these points suggest, the overall aims of PAIs are broad, but Asmuß (2008) proposes a descriptive definition of them as “recurrent strategic interviews between a superior in an organization and an employee that focus on employee performance and development” (ibid., p. 409). Mikkelsen (1998) also noted that it is a common belief that PAIs can help motivate employees and improve collegial relations, leading to optimized performance at both the individual and the organizational level. In her overview of previous research, Asmuß (2008) confirms that this belief prevails, as she states that numerous studies of PAIs have focused on ‘before’ and ‘after’, hence treating the PAI as a tool for measuring increased organizational success. Many of the studies she reviews are based on interviews with managers and/or analysis of interview guides/evaluation sheets. They often presuppose that the manager, supplied only with the necessary knowledge and tools, can control and direct the outcome of the interview (ibid.). Asmuß states that these studies “contribute significantly to our understanding of the conditions surrounding performance appraisal interviews, but they do not reveal anything about what actually happens when the supervisor and the employee meet in a performance appraisal interview” (ibid., p. 410). What is more, this approach to PAIs (and all forms of conversations) overlooks the possibility of the interaction being jointly achieved, i.e. a project for which both speakers carry responsibility.
One of the earliest studies using data from PAIs is that of Adams (1981), who investigated question/answer sequences. Her work contributed at the time to studies focusing on the organization of questions and answers, and remains an important contribution to the narrow body of literature combining CA and data from PAIs. Her findings shed light on how Q/A sequences are managed in an interview setting, and two features in particular are distinguished: (1) whether a turn is interpreted as a question or not depends on the context and not on the turn design (e.g. interrogative form), and (2) the constraint regarding conditional relevance which ties question and answer together is not restricted to “immediate juxtaposition” (ibid., p. 81). In practice, this means that the employee’s turns may not only constitute responses to the previous question, but may also be connected to topics raised earlier in the interview. Furthermore, the employee hears the manager’s turns as providing relevance for accounts, resulting in the employee giving an account of his or her performance. Adams’s findings show that interviews seeking to retrieve information need to consider the entire interaction as a potential locus for information, and not just the answer slot following upon a particular question. Finally, Adams emphasizes the interview setting as a joint achievement whose outcome is not dependent solely on the manager.

A more recent attempt to broaden understanding of the PAI as a joint interactional project between manager and employee was a study by Asmuß (2008). She investigated sequences in which critical feedback was given in the form of negative assessments. The study demonstrated that actually ‘doing performance appraisal’ was treated as problematic, despite the format of the talk – institutional, and designed to deal with performance and development. What became evident in her data was that managers displayed trouble formulating negative assessments. They attempted, for example, to mitigate the negative feedback, which led to longer interviews, while still not giving the employee an opportunity to respond or participate in sequences of a problem-solving character. In summary, her study concludes that speakers orient to a preference for agreement and treat the delivery of criticism as associated with problematicity, resulting in institutional goals being overridden.

Studying business meetings in both firms and organizations, Femø Nielsen (2009) emphasizes the need for conversation analytic studies in order to understand how an organizational culture is established and how the leadership of middle managers is accomplished in practice. Her findings underline that organizational culture takes shape in the everyday interaction between manager and employees. Socialization of new employees is accomplished, for example, by monitoring and prompting their use of relevant terms and concepts constituting the organizational dictionary. The study shows how organizational culture and leadership are intertwined, and how both are constructed and reconstructed through interactional practices.
Other research of relevance to Studies III and IV includes, for instance, the work of Jackson (1968) and Tienari et al. (2002). The notion of the ‘hidden curriculum’ was proposed by Jackson in the 1960s as he studied ‘life in classrooms’. However, the concept is still relevant and is often linked to organizational learning (Horn 2003), as it may reveal hidden norms. Based on empirical work in American classrooms, Jackson formulated unwritten demands on pupils in schools, such as mastering the art of waiting, being interrupted when working, and being able to identify and adjust to prevailing power structures. A different hidden norm is located by Tienari et al. (2002), who invoke the notion of an ‘ideal worker’ (cf. Acker 1990, 1992, 2006). This type of employee displays continuous availability, as well as, for example, a clear orientation to work as opposed to private spheres of life.

To summarize, performance appraisal interviews constitute a site of social life where many agendas intersect, both social and institutional, offering rich opportunities to study a variety of practices in actions, such as the delivery and receipt of feedback, the management of delicate issues, and the interactive enforcement of institutional goals and norms.

3.3 Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, a wide range of studies have, between them, developed a framework for the investigation of institutional settings. As Heritage & Clayman (2010:16) notes, institutional CA develops on basic findings about “the institution of talk as a means to analyze the operations of other social institutions in talk” (emphasis in original, cf. Section 1.1). This, in essence, means that interaction in institutional contexts can be studied with a focus on more general interactional practices such as “agreement” or “compliments”, or, alternatively, with an emphasis on the specific type of institutional talk in question, such as performance appraisal interview interaction or university tutorial talk. The studies that make up the empirical work of the present thesis can be said to deal with both, as my interest in institutional features of the data examined builds on work on interactional organization in other (everyday and institutional) contexts, but also aims to add to our knowledge of these particular interaction types and our understanding of the many forms (e.g. turn design, topic organization, linguistic choices, management of asymmetries etc.) that institutional orientations may take in talk. Essentially, I align myself with an approach to the study of institutional interaction that “puts institutional activity under the microscope” and, by doing so, helps to uncover “the way the world (and its problems) works” (Antaki 2011:8).
4 The data

4.1 Description and setting of the data

The present thesis consists of data collected in two different institutional settings, and as part of two different projects. The first set of data, consisting of recordings of university tutorials, was collected exclusively for the thesis project. The second, the performance appraisal interviews, was collected as part of a collaborative research project on gender and sustainable development, co-funded by the European Union Regional Development Fund, Region Värmland and Karlstad University (id 147243). I participated in that project as a project researcher during 2008–2009. Below, I describe the circumstances in which the data was collected, in terms of the setting, the participants and the recordings.

4.1.1 The university tutorial data

The recordings of university tutorials were collected at a Swedish university. Ten video recordings of 17–31 minutes each were made, with an average duration of 24 minutes. Relevant background knowledge about the tutorials recorded is that they are part of a course during which the students work in groups. The aim of the course is primarily to learn how to use a computer-based Geographic Information System (GIS), which manages and analyses geographical location data.\textsuperscript{15} However, the course is also intended to prepare students for future essay writing, as the tasks on which they are examined include writing a short paper, preparing a poster and finally giving an oral presentation based on the poster.

The students met with the teacher in groups on two occasions during the course for supervision of the short projects they were undertaking. There was no specific agenda for these gatherings, and the teacher encouraged questions of all kinds. Practical as well as theoretical issues were dealt with.

At the start of the course, the teacher had given a short lecture on ‘group dynamics’ and some issues associated with working in groups were discussed. When the students were about to constitute the groups themselves, they were encouraged to consider categories such as gender, age and aca-

\textsuperscript{15} GIS is a useful tool in many professions where, for example, spatial information and maps need to be made manageable and easily accessible.
demic experience, but they formed the groups without interference from the teacher.

I was present in the room during the recordings, sitting in a corner taking notes. The camera was placed at the end of a long table around which the students took their seats. After they had sat down I adjusted the camera position, in order to capture, as far as possible, all the participants’ faces.

Table 1. The university tutorial data: participants and length.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TUTORIAL NUMBER</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>31 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A: 6 students present</td>
<td>31 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>22 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group B: 3 students present</td>
<td>22 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>24 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group C: 6 students present</td>
<td>24 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>28 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group D: 4 students present</td>
<td>28 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:5 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>28 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group E: 3 students present</td>
<td>28 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group C: 5 students present</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group E: 4 students present</td>
<td>20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>23 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group B: 2 students present</td>
<td>23 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:4 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>24 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A: 6 students present</td>
<td>24 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:5 video</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>17 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group D: 5 students present</td>
<td>17 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 10 recordings</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 groups of students</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 h 2 min</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 The performance appraisal interview data

The performance appraisal interview data was collected in a medium-sized organization in the financial sector in Sweden. The data presented in Studies III and IV is drawn from a corpus of eight performance appraisal interviews, all recorded on digital video.\(^{16}\) Participants came from two different offices within the organization, one fairly small and the other medium-sized. Three PAIs were recorded at the medium-sized office, and three at the small one.

\(^{16}\) In Study IV, we used six of the eight recordings to analyse a particular question from the interview guide. The reason for leaving out two of the recordings, PAI numbers 7 and 8 in Table 2, is that they were recorded on a later occasion, when a slightly different interview guide was used.
and two managers (both male) and six employees (four men, two women) volunteered to have their interviews recorded. No researchers were present in the room during the actual recording.

The participants in the PAI data followed an interview guide, which we had access to. In most cases, the employees had made notes in advance in their papers, which they brought to the interview.

Table 2. *The performance appraisal interview data: participants and length.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAI NUMBER</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 video</td>
<td>Manager A Employee E</td>
<td>1 h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 video</td>
<td>Manager A Employee T</td>
<td>1 h 16 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 video</td>
<td>Manager A Employee M</td>
<td>1 h 2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 video</td>
<td>Manager B Employee L</td>
<td>1 h 15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 video</td>
<td>Manager B Employee F</td>
<td>1 h 15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 video</td>
<td>Manager B Employee C</td>
<td>1 h 13 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 audio</td>
<td>Manager B Employee C</td>
<td>1 h 6 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 audio</td>
<td>Manager B Employee F</td>
<td>52 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 8 recordings</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 managers</strong> Employee C</td>
<td><strong>8 h 59 min</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Ethical considerations

Data collection followed recommendations issued by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). In short, this means that participation was voluntary, and if all the participants present did not give their written consent to being video-recorded, no recording was made. Furthermore, the participants were informed of their right to interrupt the recording at any time, and all personal and place names have been altered so that no participant can be identified in the data presented. All the participants signed a written consent,

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17 The ethical principles applied are accessible in their entirety at www.vr.se, where a new publication called *God forskningssed* [in English, *Good Research Practice*] can also be found.
18 When I collected data at the university, there were six groups in all, but one group did not want to be recorded. The sixth group let me participate without the camera, and I was allowed to take notes. I have not used these notes except for an example in Chapter 6.
4.3 The transcripts

The data reproduced in the transcripts was transcribed in accordance with what is often referred to as the Jeffersonian transcription system, developed by Gail Jefferson.\textsuperscript{19} Since the Jeffersonian system is time-consuming, it was not used to transcribe all the data from the outset. Instead, like most CA analysts, I began by making rough transcriptions of sections of the data which I found interesting, and then developed these into more precise transcripts.

Below, I present the most frequent notations recurring in the analyses.

Table 3. Transcript notation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTATION IN TRANSCRIPT:</th>
<th>USED TO INDICATE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Square brackets Simultaneous utterances and/or overlaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Brackets ‘Empty’ brackets indicate that the transcriber is in doubt about what is being said; words within brackets are the transcriber’s best guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Equals sign An utterance followed by an equals sign is latched immediately to the following utterance marked by an equals sign with no pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>Pauses measured in tenths of a second\textsuperscript{20}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Pauses of less than (0.2) seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello:</td>
<td>Colon(s) Indicate(s) that the sound followed by the colon(s) is prolonged or extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELLO</td>
<td>Underlining Produced with emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Hello’</td>
<td>Degree signs Produced more quietly than surrounding talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Hello&lt; &lt;Hello&gt;</td>
<td>Arrows Text with arrows pointing inwards is produced more rapidly than surrounding talk; text with arrows pointing outwards is produced more slowly than surrounding talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.h</td>
<td>Audible inhalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hh (hh)</td>
<td>Audible aspiration, possibly laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£Hello£</td>
<td>Pound signs Pound signs enclose word(s) that are uttered with laughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{19} A more elaborated description of the system can be found in the introductory chapters of Atkinson & Heritage (1984) and Stivers et al. (2011), as well as in Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998).

\textsuperscript{20} All pauses have been measured in the computer program Transana. This program allows the transcriber to mark any part of a wavelength that indicates silence, and the program automatically measures the length of that pause.
| *Hello* | Asterisks | Asterisks enclose word(s) that are uttered with creaky voice |
5 Summaries

5.1 Study I

"Vadå vi? Tala för dig själv!" Om oenighet och identitet vid seminarier. [What do you mean we? Speak for yourself! On disagreement and identity in academic seminars.]

Study I examines a specific action, namely that of speaking for someone else (who is present), and its immediate and indirect counterpart action being spoken for. Data from the university tutorial corpus has been used and the analysis is divided into two parts. The first investigates how these actions are accomplished and what the interactional consequences are, while the second looks at how the development of the sequences can be analysed in relation to the contextually relevant identity of ‘student’.

The first part of the study explores the initiation, development and closing of three sequences in which the action of speaking for someone else results in some kind of disagreement. The disagreements show that speaking for someone besides oneself might be used as a resource for stance-taking, as ‘groups within the group’ are constructed, resulting in participants affiliating with different actions.

The three examples illustrate different kinds of disagreement. In the first, student A 21 constructs himself as a spokesperson for the group of students present when he addresses student B with an ‘update’ following B’s recent sick leave. The ‘update’ includes a suggestion regarding the future work of the group, and as the suggestion is delivered student C raises an objection. The objection does not concern the content of what student A has presented; rather, it challenges the way the proposal is presented as jointly owned by the group. Student A renegotiates the grounds for the objection, and treats the objection as a misunderstanding.

Example 2 also shows how a renegotiation takes place. Student D divides the group of students present into two groups, based on various opinions regarding the progression of the group’s work. Student E, who is being ascribed a certain opinion, negotiates the grounds for the initial division so that the conflicting opinions expressed are not displayed as contradictory. Exam-

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21 The students are not called A, B, C and so forth in Study I, but in order to make this summary more comprehensible, they are here.
Examples 1 and 2 differ in several ways, but what they both illustrate is how participants who have been ascribed some type of ‘passive speakership’ break out from the groups that are constructed through utterances with multiple ‘senders’.  

Example 3 differs from 1 and 2 in that student F, who responds to a question from the teacher on behalf of the group, is undermined as a spokesperson by several of the other students. As soon as F has responded to the teacher’s question, students G and H co-construct an interrogation-fashioned questioning of F’s whereabouts that same morning. This sequence is closed as student G returns to the question posed by the teacher, and responds to it in a similar way to student F’s initial response. Pointing out student F’s previous absence underscores his lack of entitlement to speak for the group, owing to his absence, which is treated as a violation of norms. I argue that speaking on behalf of others is a socially risky project, in that speakers can be held accountable for their relative entitlement to perform such an action.

In the second part of the study, the same actions are related to the construction of identities. It is argued that turns which include more participants than the current speaker as senders construct groups whose members are ascribed responsibility and/or accountability. In terms of content, the turns with multiple senders hardly lodge opinions that are offensive or ‘morally dubious’. Rather, they cast the included participants as affiliating with a certain stance, which the ‘breakout’ action then renegotiates. The students who break out from these groups recast themselves as ‘good students’, as their objections/renegotiations (1) display how they were the initiators of the suggestion put forward as the group’s proposal; (2) downplay displayed differences within the group and emphasize non-affective grounds for a potential problem; and (3) draw attention to one student as violating norms for working on a group project, consequently casting the rest of the students as ‘doing being good students working in groups’.

The results emphasize the social dynamics between the students in the university tutorials. In addition, they shed light on certain features of the interactional construction of identities, as the stance-taking actions also do the interactional work of renegotiating participation frameworks.

5.2 Study II

“Om du har något annat ord för det?” Hur deltagares skilda perspektiv kommer till uttryck i ett undervisningssammanhang. [“Could you rephrase

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22 For want of a better term, I use the static expression ‘sender’ here when referring to the participants present who are included in the group which some participant speaks on behalf of. (Cf. Goffman’s terms author and principal, referring to who produces an utterance and who is held accountable for it, discussed for example in Goodwin 2007.)
Study II uses data from the university tutorials and focuses on how participants’ ‘perspectives’ are displayed in interaction. In this paper, ‘perspective’ is treated as a wider concept than, for example, stance, and refers to the participants’ displayed approach to and understanding of the particular institutional context and activity involved, that is, the university tutorial. The study has two principal aims: first, to illustrate how orientations to both the local activity and the broader context are displayed; and second, to illustrate how these orientations maintain, construct and renegotiate the contextual framework ‘university tutorials’.

The study draws on previous research on how interactants display and manage diverging understandings of the ongoing interactional project (e.g. Schegloff 1988/89; Bockgård 2010). Sequences from the university tutorial corpus are examined, and the analyses show how participants, through various interactional procedures, display different perspectives. One of the examples is rather lengthy and illustrates perspectives which at times are contradictory. I will cite part of this sequence here, and it begins with several students expressing that they feel under stress due to the lack of time. One student (A) in the group poses a question to the teacher regarding what the students’ next step could be. She constructs a list of alternatives (“Should we focus on V, X, Y, Z or V?”)23, representing a number of potential foci that the students could opt for.

I claim that student A’s question displays an understanding of the local activity as one that invites questions, and of the overall tutorial as a place for students to put questions to the teacher. However, the teacher does not respond by giving an answer; instead, he poses a counter-question: “And what exactly is the problematicity called that you are now describing?” Student A begins to give an answer, which is treated as inadequate by the teacher, who then continues: “Do you have another word for that?”25, now addressing the entire group of students. This counter-question and its extension illustrate how the teacher displays entitlement to renegotiate the initiated Q/A activity into an activity involving some type of understanding check. His elicitation of a specific subject-related term further displays a different perspective from that of student A. The teacher invokes an ‘academic’ perspective that pays less attention to specific students’ projects, and focuses rather on an abstract discussion regarding theoretical dilemmas. His expansion of the sequence thus contributes to the interactional work of ‘doing teaching’ based on student questions raised in the tutorial activity.

23 Simplified transcripts are used throughout the summary.
24 2nd person singular pronoun, in Swedish du.
25 2nd person plural pronoun, in Swedish ni.
So far, this sequence serves to illustrate two divergent perspectives, displayed by student A and the teacher, and the respective projects that teacher and students are pursuing. However, as the sequence continues, diverging understandings of the ongoing activity are also displayed by different students. Student B answers the teacher’s probe for terminology by offering “Delimitation”, which is immediately confirmed by the teacher repeating the word. This closing of the Q/A sequence initiated by the teacher is then commented on by student C, who says: “Of course”. Student C’s comment serves to affiliate with the teacher’s project rather than student A’s, hence undermining the relevance of A’s question. Consequently, the students’ displayed perspectives perform different actions, as students B and C show alignment with the brief episode of academic teaching and thereby abandon student A’s pursuit of hands-on advice about the group project. Neither the teacher nor any of the students return to the question posed by student A, which is left unanswered.

When a student makes a request for advice from the teacher, the request can be renegotiated by the teacher to serve as a tool in a different local activity: the elicitation of terms. This diverts the scope of attention and transforms the advice-seeking activity, offering an alternative approach to the task compared with that initiated by student A. As the summary of some of the results of Study II shows, CA can be used to uncover the alignment and affiliation of participants, ultimately pinpointing what are denoted as different perspectives. Such alignments or disalignments with the ongoing activity can further our understanding of how teachers can utilize student questions to promote wider pedagogical objectives in the tutorial setting. The displayed perspectives thus contribute to finding a “shared understanding of the relevancies of their work” (Vehviläinen 2009:188), which in turn serves to tailor the advice-giving sequence to fit the task as well as the overall learning objectives of the course.

5.3 Study III

Study III emerged from the project EqualGrowth, a collaborative research project on gender and sustainable development (see section 4.1). The project as a whole had an interventionist approach, and the subproject I was involved in aimed to explore the performance appraisal interview (PAI) as an internal arena of communication (and as a potential tool for systematic efforts to improve gender-equal opportunities). As a point of departure, we set out to study institutional norms that were “talked into being” (Heritage 1984:290). A vantage point was that PAIs are a context in which managers display, and employees align or disalign with, underlying assumptions about ideals of employeeeship. The aim of the analyses presented in Study III was to examine PAIs as a potential locus for addressing workplace stress. Re-
viewing all the sequences in our data corpus in which the topic of ‘stress’ was broached, we observed how managers and employees collaboratively shaped an interactional environment where ‘positive’ approaches to stress were unproblematic, whereas negative experiences displayed in talk were treated as socially (and institutionally) problematic. On the basis of a detailed examination of participant conduct and orientation, we argue that norms concerning ideal employee-ship are shaped by a partly hidden curriculum in the organization, which in turn is talked into being in the PAIs.

The enactment of such an institutional norm limits the scope for employees to raise concerns regarding stress. The analyses show that accounts of “negative” stress are given limited space in the interaction, and that speakers tended to frame stress as “positive”, in terms of its potential to optimize performance. In one of the examples, an employee not only frames his experience of stress as positive, but also states it to be temporary and not caused by this specific workplace: “Sometimes I guess I’m stressed […] but I think I would have been if I worked in another place too.”26 The organization’s responsibility for work overload is reduced, and the experience of stress is cast as temporary, yet at the same time inevitable and independent of place and time. Towards the end of this fragment, the manager confirms the employee’s experience by enforcing the fact that some stress is essentially inevitable, as some days you “run around like a scalded rat but that’s the way it is”. This example illustrates how manager and employee co-construct the institutional norm regarding stress.

Furthermore, responsibility for experiences of ‘negative’ stress is assigned to the individual employee rather than to the organization. This makes the PAI a problematic site for negotiating matters of stress and other issues at the intersection of work and family. A consequence of this problemat-icity is that structural issues in the organization risk remaining unresolved. In order for interviews of this type to work effectively as tools for improving conditions in working life, the study calls for increased attention to the PAI as a communication event. We argue that the study of participant orientations in the data provided new insights into the opportunities, limitations and restrictions brought into being for employees, and into the interactional consequences of manager formulations regarding preferred orientations to stress. To sum up, Study III concludes that empirical attention to the social interplay in PAIs reveals how participant conduct aligns or disaligns with institutional and social underpinnings of workplace ideals.

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26 Fragment 1, “Do you feel that you’re stressed often or”.

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Study IV examines how a standardized question is launched and received in the corpus of performance appraisal interviews (PAIs). The manager and the employees follow an interview template of questions, and our analysis targets one question in particular: “How do you think that you’re contributing to the [organization] reaching the long-term goals?” The analysis pays specific attention to how this question is translated from the interview template into actions in interaction, and how different delivery formats yield different response sequences. It emerges that verbatim reproduction of the question item is rare, occurring in only one of the six interviews examined. In the other five, the question is altered in various ways. In one of the fragments analysed, the question is produced after a preface: “And then it says in here a little about this (.) how do you think that […]”. In another version, the question is more closely fitted to the local interactional environment, using plural pronouns and temporal references. Despite reformulations of the original question, its delivery is usually characterized by a strong orientation to its written form, either visually (gaze) or through a monotonous ‘reading voice’. This enhances the role of the interview guide as something that is highly relevant for the participants to orient to in the interaction. It also makes the manager an animator (cf. Goffman 1981) of the question, which in turn reduces the manager’s degree of accountability for invoking the question in the interview, as its source is located outside the interaction.

Furthermore, the study concludes that the different delivery formats of the target question impact subsequent employee answers and sequence development. Seemingly minor alterations to the question make relevant more specific second pair parts and, as a result, different employees essentially receive different questions. In one of the sequences, modality is attached to the question through laughter and several reformulations from the original target question. This results in a playful tone and displays a distance from the interview guide. On the one hand, this question format radically transforms the range of options available as relevant answers to the question; and on the other, the manager’s displayed distance from the template results in reduced distance to the employee, hence implying shared objectives. In addition, the target question can be recruited to initiate other interactional projects, such as assessment sequences. As the managers recurrently orient to a role as animators rather than authors of the question, the social complications of negative performance appraisal can be reduced.

Given that the same question assumes such different forms when launched in interaction, our findings call for increased awareness regarding reliance on question templates. On the surface, the Q/A sequences may seem comparable, but close investigation shows that they are not. Since managers

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27 In Swedish: “Hur tycker du att du bidrar till att banken når de långsiktiga målen?”
make notes of employee answers to each question, there may be a risk of unfair assessment stemming from different treatments of the same question, which in turn could have consequences for employees in terms of in-house opportunities, salary negotiations and opportunities for training. Our examination of the relationship between theory (decontextualized interview templates) and practice (questions launched in situ) in performance appraisal interviews builds on and contributes to the body of conversation analytic studies of questioning in institutional interaction, and of the interplay between social and institutional agendas.

5.5 Study V

Study V explores the interactional use and functions of a particular verb, *känna* ‘feel’, in the university tutorial corpus. To my knowledge, there are no previous studies focusing on *känna* or its English equivalent ‘feel’, and for that reason this paper aims to provide an exploratory overview of some of the social actions organized by the use of the verb. The study builds on the existing literature on linguistic items which semantically express subjectivity, but also contributes to our understanding of how such items may perform a range of different actions in interaction (e.g. Jefferson 2004; Kärkkäinen 2003, 2006, 2007).

The paper provides examples that distinguish three main functions of *känna* ‘feel’. Firstly, the teacher is found to use the verb in longer turns in which he animates the students in hypothetical but probable scenarios. In these scenarios he ascribes the students different feelings, such as:

> “when you’re working on a project and you start to feel the lack of time […] it can be one of those sources of frustration just not knowing where someone is, [so] it can be good to actually maintain communication”

In this example, the teacher is practising ‘imperative advice-giving’, meaning that he describes an event that is likely to occur in the near future, and if the student follows his advice, the risk of experiencing/feeling a lack of time will be reduced. This example also has an element of socialization to it, as the teacher invokes his knowledge about the procedures affecting the students’ situation.

Secondly, *känna* ‘feel’ serves as a hedging device, as its subjective quality diminishes or eliminates potential risks of accountability. In the following short example, a student is explaining why the group has chosen to include a specific geographical location in their work: “[…] I think that Old Uppsala there feels kinda important maybe. […] It feels like a central place.” Thus, ‘feel’ initiates, and hence frames, the subclause that constitutes the actual
argument projected by “I think”. It is argued that this use of ‘feel’ operates as a hedging device when epistemic claims are being made.

Thirdly, ‘feel’ is deployed in questions and formulations concerning the ongoing interaction. For example, the teacher constructs a question with ‘feel’ that functions as an upshot formulation (Antaki et al. 2005): “So it feels like you’ve drowned a little”. The student replying deploys ‘feel’ in her response, in which she formulates a statement with features of reflection and assessment: “Yes it feels a bit what are we supposed to do with this” (referring to the data collected for the students’ project). Formulations such as this concern the group’s ongoing project, which all the other participants present have (varying) epistemic access to.

Several indications of the institutional impact of the use of ‘feel’ can be located in the data. One is the uneven distribution of its different functions between the categories ‘teacher’ and ‘student’, with the teacher, for example, using the verb to animate the students as actors in a possible scenario (the first example). It is argued that the teacher invokes knowledge about certain routines, which he is entitled to as the institutional representative. This means that the sequence analysed can be viewed as an instance of institutionality being talked into being (Heritage 1984:290). One participant, the teacher, has superior epistemic access to recurring procedures (Stivers et al. 2011), making it possible for him to predict how the other participants, the students, will ‘feel’ in the near future. This use of känna ‘feel’ illustrates how the teacher demonstrates not only superior epistemic access, but also epistemic primacy (ibid.).

In sum, ‘feel’ serves as an interactional device that allows speakers to create an interactional space in which accountability and responsibility can be negotiated. Institutionality is recurrently made relevant, as some uses of känna ‘feel’ are linked to the participants’ contextual identities, while the verb is also found to manage epistemic access and primacy.
6 General discussion

The studies making up this thesis investigate interaction in two institutional settings: the university tutorial and the performance appraisal interview. The main aim of the thesis has been to explore how ‘institutionality’ is accomplished, managed and negotiated. Focusing on two specific institutional settings, a more specific aim has been to investigate how different institutional agendas are talked into being, and what types of institutional norms are both constructed and displayed by the participants in these contexts. I have addressed these aims by examining general questions such as:

- How is ‘institutionality’ made relevant, and how is it accomplished?
- How are institutional norms maintained, constructed and reproduced?
- How does ‘institutionality’ impact the interaction in general and the sequential trajectory in particular?

Since the results are presented in the separate studies, this final chapter brings together some of these findings and discusses them in relation to the overall aims.

Section 6.1 begins by referring to the three features of institutional talk identified by Drew & Heritage (1992) (see below), with the intention of illustrating how institutional features can be located in the data and how institutional norms are organized in interaction. Following this, I discuss selected examples more specifically in relation to the themes of knowledge/entitlement, stance-taking/identities and linguistic expression. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

6.1 The negotiation of institutional norms

Returning first of all to Heritage & Greatbatch’s ‘fingerprint’ metaphor for characterizing institutional settings, we find that the studies on which this thesis is based exemplify in various ways how institutionality is negotiated and managed in interaction. Drew & Heritage (1992:22) offer three indicators that can be used when characterizing an institutional setting (cf. Chapter 3):
1. The speakers display an orientation to some goal, task or identity specific to the institution.
2. The speakers display an orientation to certain constraints regarding interactional contributions.
3. The speakers make relevant inferential frameworks and procedures associated with the context.

Using these indicators, it is possible to shed light on actions and activities through which the participants co-construct an institutional setting and maintain, construct and reproduce institutional norms.

Firstly, in the university tutorials, the teacher and the students talk exclusively about topics related to the course: that is, things that have to do with the students’ specific tasks or circumstances related to them. In one of the tutorials, a student talks about having to move, which might be considered a personal circumstance. However, this is only brought up because it interferes with the group’s scheduled presentation, and the students consequently suggest a change in the schedule. The PAIs show a similar pattern, with only a few brief digressions from the template, and even then talk centres on work-related matters. This shows that participants treat themselves as accountable when dealing with non-institutional matters, and therefore fit such contributions to the institutional framework and their shared tasks.

That the participants in the data deal exclusively with activity-related topics and do not raise non-institutional, everyday matters is a result in itself. Considering that the manager and most of the employees have worked together for quite some time, and also that the teacher has met the students on previous courses and seems to have frequent contact with them throughout the course recorded, this finding confirms that speakers normally pay a great deal of attention to specific local agendas related to the immediate context. This orientation serves to maintain and reconstruct norms related to the activity, in this case the university tutorial or the PAI.

Secondly, examples of some type of interactional contribution indicating the existence of “special constraints” (Drew & Heritage 1992:22) are easy to find in both settings. In the tutorials for instance, longer monologues with lecture-like features are frequently produced by the teacher – and only by the teacher. A variant of these is discussed in Study V, where the use of känna ‘feel’ is in focus. That study argues that the teacher is entitled to ascribe feelings to the students with the help of känna ‘feel’, as his contextually relevant identity allows him to give advice and predict what the students will experience in the near future. In the PAIs, special constraints can be illustrated by the adjacency pair question/answer. First, it is the manager who closes each question/answer sequence, moving forward with questions from the template. This orientation shows that certain interactional contributions (questions from the interview guide) are reserved for a specific category of participant (managers). Also, in both settings, questions are interpreted
through what might be called an ‘institutional filter’, meaning that questions such as “How are you doing?”, for example, are related by the answerers to the institutional activity, and not to personal well-being. The students tend to give answers such as “Better and better day by day”, referring to the development of their papers. These answers also invoke their identities as students, as they respond as representatives of that category and not as private individuals. This resonates with Adams’s (1981) observations from performance appraisal interviews, where seemingly neutral questions such as “how ya doin’?” were treated as making relevant a second pair part focusing on performance appraisal.

Thirdly, an inferential framework that is brought into play concerns the situational identities of the participants present. In five of the recorded tutorials (all recorded the same morning), the teacher’s daughter is present. Her presence is accounted for, with the teacher explaining to the students at the beginning of each tutorial that the kindergarten is closed that day. What the teacher’s account makes relevant is that the daughter’s presence deviates from the expected: that is, the ‘normal’ categories attending the tutorial would be ‘teacher’ and ‘student’. A different inferential framework invoked in the PAIs regards the bank’s business-related goal of getting clients to invest money in it. In one of the recordings, an employee who has not achieved the individual result expected by the bank (i.e. she has not sold as much as the bank had hoped for) is prompted by the manager to encourage customers to increase their monthly savings. The employee responds by stating that she always raises this topic, but that she simply cannot ask someone who, for example, is “old and has a hundred thousand in the bank” to increase their monthly savings. She frames this defensive response as morally justified, and does not receive any uptake by the manager. The example illustrates different ‘moral orientations’, with the employee invoking an everyday ‘rational’ account for her actions, whereas the manager affiliates with the bank’s goals, thereby invoking a context-related inferential framework that makes relevant a different moral order.

To summarize, Drew & Heritage’s three points offer a model for unpacking ‘institutionality’ by targeting different levels of interactions. As the examples discussed show, ‘institutionality’ is accomplished by means of the participants’ actions, and the speakers recurrently display an orientation to institutional norms.

I will now go on to discuss a few of the results in relation to the three themes (cf. Section 1.2), in order to pinpoint, first, how these themes have been investigated, and second, what relevance they have to a study of the construction, maintenance and reproduction of institutional norms. It is important to stress that the themes are treated as broad concepts related to different aspects, and sometimes different levels, of interaction. To make the summary that follows more comprehensible, the following broad definitions of the terms discussed in Sections 2.2.3, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 can be given:
• **Knowledge** refers to virtually anything in interaction which speakers may be held accountable for presenting or for aligning or affiliating with or against.

• **Entitlement** concerns rights and restrictions invoked by speakers.

• **Stance** is related to, among other things, modality, evaluation, subjectivity and epistemics.

• **Identities** are context-bound and are made relevant by the participants.

• **Linguistic expression** refers to the linguistic design of turns and social actions.

**Theme A: The Management of Knowledge and Entitlement**

There are numerous examples in the data of how knowledge and entitlement are intertwined, and further, of how the management of these dimensions in interaction displays institutional norms and agendas. In order to discuss how these things are accomplished and connected, I will give an example from Study I, which focuses on the action of speaking for someone besides oneself. In the example, the teacher asks how the students’ work has progressed during the past week by offering the candidate answer (Pomerantz 1988): “Completely on top of things?” Student A responds: “I think so”, which is immediately followed by a counter-question by student B: “Do you think so?” As the sequence unfolds, it becomes clear that student A has not attended a meeting with the other students that same morning. A short discussion takes place between the students before this topic is closed by student B, who turns to the teacher and responds to the initial question: “No but I think that it feels all right”. Using the terminology offered by Stivers et al. (2011), this example shows how student B invokes the premises of epistemic primacy by practically repeating the same answer to the teacher’s question as A produced earlier. We can consequently conclude that it is not what A says that prompts resistance; rather, B treats A as not entitled to speak on behalf of the group.

While this example illustrates how participants monitor each other and invoke restrictions regarding rights to speak, it also shows how they hold each other accountable for what they say. Judging from the recording, student A does not seem to lack any particular information (owing to his earlier absence) that would make him inferior to B in terms of epistemic access.

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28 The extract, number 3 in Study I, is called “Feels pretty okay actually” [Känns ganska okej faktiskt].

29 In Swedish the teacher says: “Grym koll?” The English translation indicates the meaning rather than the form of the teacher’s response, as “Grym koll” has a much more colloquial/slang tone than the translation.
This means that A is being held accountable for something else, and I argue that his absence earlier that morning is seen as a violation of what the participants perceive as prevailing norms regarding working in groups as students. This further emphasizes the connection Stivers et al. (2011) make between knowledge and morality. By questioning someone’s behaviour, one pinpoints the expected and normal – and implicitly invokes a moral order. This is confirmed by Linell & Bredmar (1996:347), who state that interactants “follow a rationality informed by moral choices”, meaning that particular topics may be cast as delicate by way of participants’ management of them, including those which “touch upon interlocutors’ responsibilities for leading their lives in good or bad, acceptable or blameworthy ways” (ibid., p. 348).

In sum, this example illustrates how social sanctions regarding entitlement are employed in interaction, and how this invokes a moral order. Consequently, this management maintains and reproduces institutional norms.

Study II offers examples of how knowledge and entitlement can be deeply intertwined, as sequences from the university tutorials show how the teacher elicits academic or subject-related terms from the students. When a student for example asks the teacher what it might be “smart” for them to do – include a wide or a narrow geographical area in the scope of their study – the teacher immediately diverts the student’s attention away from a question of “X or Y” and towards the topic of “delimitation”. I argue that this diversion by the teacher illustrates two things: first, the teacher’s authority to divert the scope of attention, and second, a kind of preference for dealing with a topic in a certain way, using institution-specific lexical items. The preference I am referring to here is not related to turn design; rather, it belongs at a higher level in interaction, as it expresses a clear intention or ambition on the part of the teacher. Preference is a risky word to use, given its status as a specific term within CA. At the same time, its everyday meaning offers possibilities, as ‘prefer’ expresses a lighter form of intention than, say, ‘desire’ or ‘wish’. Also, the preference involved in this case is closely connected to the context and its relevant identities, as it is not the teacher’s personal wish that is expressed; rather, it is the ‘teacher’ who directs attention to a certain level and elicits the use of specific academic terms. This activity has clear pedagogical features, and the result resonates with Sandlund’s findings, where the teacher used longer turns with the aim of “modeling appropriate feedback receipt and giving” (Sandlund 2004:309, italics in original) in the activity of ‘giving critical feedback’. Similarly, Femø Nielsen (2009), who examined PAIs, found evidence of managers practising socialization of employees by, for example, orienting to the use of an “organizational dictionary” (2009:32).

The solicitation of specific terms makes relevant institutional norms, as it invokes the student’s knowledge and understanding of the overall subject, at the same time as it displays the workings of asymmetries in relation to the participants’ entitlement.
THEME B: STANCETAKING AND THE DISPLAY OF IDENTITIES

Study I targets interaction in the university tutorial data and discusses the display of a potential ‘student identity’. The students in my data seem to orient to an institutional agenda that combines those emerging from the work of Tracy (1997) and Benwell & Stokoe (2002, 2005 [2004]). The sequences analysed in Study I display orientations both to exposing potential disagreements and to downplaying internal disagreements. A possible explanation for this rather contradictory conduct is that the students participate as members of a group, which makes relevant orientations towards both their own category of ‘student’ and the other category of participant present, ‘teacher’. The dynamic interplay between the students, as well as between the students and the teacher, may result in orientations that conflict. These inconsistent orientations also serve as markers of stance, as the social positioning that takes place creates counterpoints and, by affiliating with one or the other ‘side’, the speakers consequently take stance. Perhaps the students in my data are both ‘doing being students’ and ‘doing education’, the first of which allows the display of dynamic relations between the participants, while the second invokes an orientation to the display of cooperation. To sum up, Study I illustrates how the students display and make relevant norms related to identities in the university tutorial data.

The participants in the PAIs allowed us to study a similar phenomenon. PAIs are believed to offer employees an opportunity to talk about almost anything, including negative experiences of work. In reality, however, it became evident that, overall, a positive experience is displayed. Study III focuses on sequences in which the employees were asked to explain whether they experienced stress “often”. Theoretically, stress might be considered to be an individual experience which the subject ‘owns’; in practice, though, the data makes it clear that experiences of stress are shaped in and by the interaction, as employees frequently reformulated and recast previously described experiences of stress to fit with the manager’s responses to their first turn. This can be compared with the concept of ‘memory’, which was transformed by Edwards & Potter (e.g. 1992) when they respecified it as something realized in interaction, rather than an internal cognitive process. The analysis from Study III shows that experiences of stress function as tools for the participants when they are negotiating and reinforcing norms of employeeship. “The good employee” is one who can cope with stress and who perceives it as positive and adrenalin-generating. The analysis concludes that norms of employeeship “are continuously made visible, reconstructed and reinforced” (Study III, p. 70).
All five studies pay close attention to the linguistic means by which the participants manage knowledge, entitlement, stance and identities. A concrete example is the use of pronouns, which are vital linguistic items for the students when they are constructing subgroups (Study I), and which can ultimately be used for stance-taking and affiliation. Pronoun use is also part of the construction of “the good employee” (Study III), as both employees and managers construct the notion of a community by drawing on inclusion and exclusion with the help of personal pronouns (cf. Heritage 1997:235). Another example of a lexical item that is ascribed great importance is the adverbial “often”, as heard in the question: “Do you experience stress often?” (Study III). In one of the examples analysed, an employee cast his possible experiences of stress as unproblematic, as they do not occur often. This example demonstrates how the question design creates an opportunity for the responder to renegotiate the focus of the question to deal with frequency, rather than the actual experience of stress. The elicitation of specific terms (Study II) also makes it evident that linguistic choice is crucial when certain topics are being talked about in an educational setting. In the university tutorial, it may also provide evidence of the socialization process, as the use of relevant terms may indicate that a student has reached an expected level of understanding.

In addition, when describing experiences of stress (Study III), the participants voice sociocultural notions of how stress not only can, but should, be perceived. Their descriptions make relevant possible interpretations of stress as “negative” or “positive”, where the latter casts stress almost as desirable, as it generates adrenalin and effectiveness. It is also expressed that you may “get this feeling in your stomach”, but that is described by the manager as “pretty natural” and is hardly treated as a valid answer to the original question from the interview guide (“Do you experience stress often?”). The notion of stress as located in feelings in the stomach probably indexes cultural notions (cf. e.g. Mesquita & Frijda 1992).

Another study that has linguistic formats as the primary focus of the analysis is Study V, which examines occurrences of the verb känn ‘feel’ in the university tutorials, and explores the social actions organized by this verb. Känna ‘feel’, which semantically relates to subjectivity and individual experience, is found to have little to do with experiences of feelings, and to function rather as an interactional resource for taking stance. In several cases in the data, use of this verb seems to work as a ‘diminisher’ by which speakers make themselves unassailable. Arguments expressed as being based on feelings are difficult to challenge, and the vagueness of feelings is also used by speakers to reduce accountability. Linking this to the other themes, it also seems that känn ‘feel’ may be used by the students to establish epistemic access. When discussing the group’s next step, the teacher may request ac-
counts or arguments regarding what the students have planned. For example, to the question why a group should include a specific historical site in their work, a student answers: “It feels like a central place”. This short utterance does not reveal much about the sequential development, but the turn functions as an argument by which the student positions herself as entitled to decide the relevance of the historical site in question. She may not know whether or not it is a good decision to include the site, but by having a feeling about it she establishes a foundation for engaging in an argument.

Study IV, drawing on data from the PAIs, examines the launch of one specific question: “How do you think that you’re contributing to the organization reaching the long-term goals?” and considers how this question is interactionally implemented. The study has several aims that focus on linguistic format. It shows, to begin with, that the question is rarely produced verbatim; rather, it is translated into the interaction with minor alterations, in order to fit with the sequential environment. This indicates that the participants are strongly influenced by what Elizabeth Stokoe refers to as the “interational imperative”, meaning that speakers tend to adjust and modify written questions, for example, so that they fit the interaction and the sequential environment. Secondly, the study illuminates how minor alterations to a question have interactional consequences. The changes to the question are shown to make relevant different second pair parts, consequently creating different possibilities for individual employees to answer what in the interview guide seems to be the same question. This is important evidence regarding issues of standardization and validity, as the results show that comparable circumstances are difficult to enact with the help of interview guides and the like.

As the examples discussed in this section illustrate, knowledge, entitlement, stance and identities are closely intertwined, and the management of these is highly visible in the data. They also offer suitable vantage points for studying the interactional accomplishment of ‘institutionality’ in general, and institutional norms in particular. By way of a summary, the following table gives examples of the themes investigated, drawn from the studies. It should not be viewed as a complete survey of the results, but rather as an illustration of how the themes are linked together and how they have been extracted from the studies.

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30 Personal communication from Elizabeth Stokoe, who has not yet published anything on the workings, meaning and consequences of the “interactional imperative”.

63
Table 4. Examples of the three themes in the studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study I</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE &amp; ENTITLEMENT</th>
<th>STANCE &amp; IDENTITIES</th>
<th>LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants display restrictions regarding rights to speak for others than themselves.</td>
<td>Groups within the group are created; the category ‘student’ is made relevant.</td>
<td>Singular and plural pronouns are examples of linguistic means by which speakers create (sub)groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Study II      | There is an orientation to correct use of specific terms.                               | The management of specific terms is related to participants’ perspectives.            | Specific linguistic choices are elicited.                                             |

| Study III     | Experiences of stress are treated as something that is not reserved for the individual with the experience. | Experiences of stress can be used to take stance and to affiliate with/against the organization’s goals; norms concerning ideal employment are displayed. | The linguistic choices made when describing experiences of stress index sociocultural norms of stress, e.g. notions of “positive”/“negative” stress. |

| Study IV      | The TQ\textsuperscript{31} examined requests personal reflection, i.e. something that the employee owns, knows and has direct access to. | Depending on the design of the TQ, the employee is offered different opportunities to take stance and dis/affiliate with the institutional agenda. | Seemingly minor alterations to the TQ result in employees receiving different questions; the TQ format also impacts subsequent sequence development. |

| Study V       | The participants manage epistemic access and primacy with the help of feelings.          | \textit{Känna} ‘feel’ operates as a hedging device when epistemic claims are made.    | The functions of the verb \textit{känna} ‘feel’ are investigated.                      |

This table ends the concluding discussion, and the next and final section will offer some concluding remarks.

6.2 Concluding remarks

This thesis has added to the existing literature on institutional interaction, with the aim of further developing understanding of how institutional norms and agendas are ‘talked into being’. The conversation analytical approach has further sought to highlight the relationship between linguistic formats and social actions, in order to demonstrate how, in various ways, institutional norms and agendas have consequences for speakers. Besides developing understanding of the contexts studied, I hope that the results will help to

\textsuperscript{31} TQ is short for target question, i.e. the specific question from the interview guide that is the subject of investigation in Study IV.
demonstrate the potential applicability of studies such as these. In his new book *Applied Conversation Analysis*, Charles Antaki (2011) presents different kinds of applied CA which seek to implement the institutional orders of interaction for a larger purpose. This thesis may to a large extent be assigned to the strand Antaki refers to as ‘institutional applied CA’, which aims to illuminate the routines of institutions. Some of the results may also be of interest to ‘interventionist applied CA’, which seeks to solve some type of problem that may be identified through CA analyses. Antaki sketches a metaphor that compares interventionist applied CA to applied physics. The conversation analyst would then correspond to the physicist, who may help a radiographer to calculate the right dosage of X-rays; and the radiographer would correspond to a representative of a company, organization or the like:

> The radiographer’s pre-existing practical problem of reducing risk to patients can be helped by the application of the physicist’s theoretical expertise. The physicist departs, having helped solve the dosage issue; and also having learnt more about energy and radiation, and refined theory accordingly. . . . . CA is not yet in the phone book, and has not reached the point where calls come in from outside agencies wanting CA help. Rather, it is the CA researcher who sees the possibility of working in collaboration with others to solve a problem, and do some funded social sciences in the process. (Antaki 2011:8–9.)

As Antaki argues, conversation analytic work has the potential to offer contributions to our understanding of social institutions on at least two levels. First, empirical studies of institutional interaction offer rich insights into the workings of institutional roles, tasks and constraints, insights that can expand social scientific understanding of institutional practice in general and of specific interactional contexts in particular. As applied institutional CA, the studies presented in this thesis have yielded insights into the linguistic shaping of social actions, and into some larger social issues. For example, the interactional management of stress in performance appraisal interviews (Study III) sheds light on how managers and employees collaboratively shape a discursively favoured approach to stress as optimizing performance, which in turn offers knowledge concerning ideals in working life, as well as warranting some caution regarding the ‘information-gathering’ function of performance appraisals. Similarly, the university tutorial studies reveal the clash between institutional and social concerns which students negotiate, showing that affiliation/disaffiliation in peer groups should not be overlooked when planning group work such as tutorials (Study I).

Secondly, conversation analytic findings can also give rise to interventionist work. Just as Stokoe (2011) has worked closely with mediators using (analysed) recordings of phone calls to mediation services, findings from the studies presented here could be used for communication training with managers (and employees), or with university teachers. Both performance ap-
praisal interviews and university tutorials constitute sites of social life where many agendas intersect, both social and institutional, offering rich opportunities to study a variety of practices in actions, such as the delivery and receipt of feedback, the management of interpersonally delicate issues, and the interactional enforcement of institutional goals and norms. By examining the everyday workings of these settings, I hope to have shed light on a couple of such issues and spurred an interest in others in future studies in this area.
7 Sammanfattning


De empiriska studierna utforskar en rad olika aspekter av institutionell interaktion och baseras på två datakorpusar av videoinspelningar av naturligt

Hur deltagarna interaktionellt konstruerar institutionella agendor är ett övergripande tema i alla fem studierna, som under analysarbetets gång mottlat ut tre återkommande underteman. Dessa rör sig på delvis olika plan och överlappar och kompletterar varandra, och behandlas i varierande grad i de olika studierna. Den första tematiken (A) benämns på engelska knowledge and entitlement, vilket kan översättas med kunskap och berättigande/rättigheter. Detta tema gör gällande frågor om hur, och med vilka samtalsresurser, samtalsdeltagare hanterar kunskap. Det innefattar bland annat vem som har rätt att säga och göra vissa saker vid en särskild tidpunkt i interaktionen. Det andra temat (B) betecknas stance-taking and identities, det vill säga positionering och identiteter, och avser hur och med vilka resurser samtalsdeltagare åstadkommer social positionering och hur olika kontextuellt bundna identiteter görs relevanta. Det tredje temat (C), linguistic expression, avser den språkliga utformningen av sociala handlingar och omfattar exempelvis ordval och andra lingvistiska resurser. Detta tredje tema är både ett ämne i sig och ett medel med vilket de andra två fenomenen konstrueras.

Av de fem artiklarna i avhandlingen baseras tre (I, II och V) på seminariematerialet och två (III, IV) på data från materialet av medarbetarsamtal. Studie I32 undersöker sekvenser från handledningsseminarierna där studenterna talar för fler (närvarande) personer än bara sig själva, samt det närliggande fenomenet att bli talad för av en annan deltagare. Analysen fokuserar dels på hur handlingen att tala för någon annan går till i samtalen, dels hur sekvenserna kan förstås i relation till den kontextuellt relevanta identiteten ”student”. Studien visar att ”tala för andra” kan vara socialt känsligt, och understycker den sociala dynamiken som råder i ett klassrum. Vidare belyser den hur deltagares positioneringar producerar och förhandlar fram rådande ramar för deltagande.

Studie II har fokus på hur deltagarna bitvis uppvisar hur de orienterar sig mot den pågående institutionella uppgiften på skilda sätt, vilket benämns som att deltagarna ger uttryck för divergerande perspektiv. Resultaten pekar

32 Se sidan 5 för studiernas respektive titlar.
på att läraren med olika resurser socialiserar studenterna till hur man ska förhålla sig till det övergripande ämnet, bland annat genom att efterfråga ämnesrelaterade termer och inte svara på praktiska frågor. Studien visar också hur frågor kan användas som resurser för att initiera nya aktiviteter, då läraren kan transformera en fråga till utgångspunkt för att uppnå övergripande pedagogiska mål.


Studie IV tar avstamp i interaktionsforskning om användningen av förutbestämda frågor i intervjuframställning. Undersökningen fokuserar empiriskt på en särskild fråga i det skriftliga förberedelsematerialalet och 1) hur den levereras, och 2) vad den öppnar för möjligheter för medarbetaren som ska svara på den. Resultaten visar att minimala justeringar av frågan i förhållande till hur den är konstruerad skriftligt, leder till att olika medarbetare får skilda frågor ställda till sig, och följaktligen ges varierande möjligheter att svara på frågan. Även i den här studien används den aktuella frågan (av chefen) för att öppna för andra aktiviteter.


I avhandlingens diskussion kopplas de empiriska studierna ihop under de tre analytiska teman som presenterats ovan (A–C). Exempel ges från de olika studierna som visar hur samtalsdeltagarna på olika sätt förhandlar om kunskap, berättigande, positionering och identitet. Följande uppställning redovisar en skissartad översikt och visar hur teman vävs samman:
**KUNSKAP & BERÄTTIGANDE** | **POSITIONERING & IDENTITET** | **SPRÄKLIG UTFORMNING**
---|---|---
**Studie I** Deltagarna uppvisar restriktioner gällande vem som får tala för fler än de själva. | Grupper i gruppen skapas. Kategorin ‘student’ görs relevant. | Pronomenbruk, i huvudsak vi/ni, utgör en lingvistisk resurs när grupper skapas. 
**Studie II** En strävan efter att använda korrekta termer uppvisas. | Olika behandling av termer kopplas till deltagarnas skilda perspektiv. | Specifika ämnesrelaterade termer efterfrågas. 
**Studie IV** Den specifikt studerade frågan efterfrågar personliga erfarenheter och reflektioner, dvs. saker som medarbetaren har exklusiv tillgång till och kunskap om. | Beroende på frågans interaktionella utformning ges olika medarbetare olika möjligheter att ta ställning för/emot den institutionella agendan. | Till synes små förändringar i frågans utformning resulterar i att olika frågor ställs. Frågan projicerar olika handlingar och resulterar i olika sekventiella utgångar. 
**Studie V** Deltagarna hanterar epistemicitet genom att hänvisa till känslor. | "Känna” fungerar som en ’dämpningsåtgärd’ vilken reducerar grad av ställningstagande. | Användningen av verbet ”känna” står i fokus.

Resultaten kopplas vidare till konstruktion av institutionella normer och det konstateras att studierna dels uppvisar hur specifika normer görs relevanta (t.ex. vem som får tala för vem på seminariet och hur ska man förhålla sig till stress i medarbetarsamtalet), dels hur konstruktion och reproduktion av normer sker på ett mer generellt plan. Slutfilen argumenteras för att avhandlingen belyser kopplingen mellan sociala handlingar och den språkliga utformningen, och att studierna visar på tillämpbarheten hos metoden som används, alltså Conversation Analysis. Resultaten i studierna indikerar att de undersökta kontexterna utgör sociala platser där flera olika agendor möts, både sociala och institutionella, och att de ibland är motsägelsefulla och ställer höga krav på samtalsdeltagarna.
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