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Facial Expression in an Assessment

Facial expression in psychology

More than 130 years ago, Charles Darwin (1872) pointed out that facial expression serves important adaptive function in regulating the interaction between humans (and many animals alike). He demonstrated how the expression of major emotions in face and body “could be analysed in terms of adaptive behaviour patterns, of which they were considered to be the rudiments” (Scherer 1996, 286). For example, the ways in which humans express negative feelings having to do with disgust and contempt through facial movements around the mouth and nose, and through turning away, may originate in specific situations where our ancestors have encountered offensive odours which they have tried to expel or exclude (Darwin 1872: 253-277).

Darwin’s work got forgotten for almost a century. In early and mid 20th Century, the study of facial expression was not central in the agenda of human sciences. However, in 1960s and 70s, Darwin’s work was found again, most notably, perhaps, by Paul Ekman who was involved in a cross-cultural study on facial expression of emotion (e.g. Ekman et al. 1969). Using photos and films of faces with different expressions, Ekman and his colleagues tried to pin down the connections between emotional states and details of the muscular movement in the face, as well as the ways in which people recognize such movements as expressions of particular emotions (for an accessible overview, see Ekman 2003; see also Izard 1971). Although Ekman discusses the uses of facial expression in social interaction (1979), the main focus of his work lies elsewhere, that is, in the ways in which internal emotional states are expressed and recognized in and through the face.

A rather different take on facial expression can be found in the work of Chovil (1991, 1997) and Bavelas (Bavelas & Chovil 1997; 2000). Rather than focussing on the functions of face as an output of internal emotional processes, they examine facial displays¹ as “visible acts of meaning”, by considering the ways in which the facial displays “are part of the integrated message with words” (Bavelas & Chovil 2000: 166; cf. Fridlund 1996). Using video recorded data from two-party conversations in a psychology laboratory setting, Chovil (1991) found two major types of facial displays. *Syntactic* displays involve facial expressions (most often, raising or lowering eyebrows) that serve for example in emphasizing or underlining what is said, or mark a question, or the beginning or the continuation (after a side track) of a story. In *semantic* displays, the facial expression for

1 Bavelas and Chovil use the term facial *display* rather than facial *expression*, thereby emphasizing the active uses of face in interaction (cf. Parkinson et al. 2005, 177). In this chapter, we will use the two terms interchangeably.

example conveys the personal reaction of the speaker to what is spoken about (e.g., references to particular “disgusting” foods may be accompanied by wrinkling of nose), or it can involve re-enactment of past experiences, or it can signal thinking or remembering. Semantic displays can be either redundant (i.e., the same semantic content is conveyed also by words) or non-redundant (the semantic content is conveyed by face alone). Yet another type of facial display involves *listener comment*: movements of brows or lips which convey that the listener is attending, or more pronounced facial expressions that convey the listener’s personal reaction to what is being said.

Through considering the work of Ekman and his colleagues on one hand, and Chovil and Bavelas on the other, we can outline two ways of approaching facial expression. As Bavelas and Chovil (2000, 166) point out, these two approaches involve methodological choices rather than ultimate claims about the “essence” of facial expression.

Table 1: Two approaches to facial expression

| | EKMAN ET AL. | CHOVIL & BAVELAS |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Key aspect of facial expression | Output of internal psycho-physical state | Communicative resource |
| Meaning of face | Key expressions have inherent meanings | Meaning arises from linguistic context |

In our project, we are predominantly informed by the Chovil & Bavelas-approach. However, we want to develop this approach further towards the analysis of moment-by-moment evolving social interaction. Using conversation analysis (CA; see e.g. Heritage 1984, Peräkylä 2004) as a methodological resource, we will focus on the ways in which participants’ facial expressions interact, on momentary basis, with each other, with their words, and with other aspects of their non-lexical expression, such as gaze and prosody. An important resource in this effort are Charles and Marjorie Goodwin’s seminal studies on mutual monitoring and organization of participation (e.g. Goodwin MH 1980; Goodwin C 1984). In what follows, we will first describe our method of research and discuss the methodological choices. Second, we will describe with the help of a case-study the moment-by-moment interactional work performed by facial expression in a particular conversational action, assessment. Drawing on the analysis, we will then make some hypotheses concerning the uses of face in the activity of assessment, and finally, we will suggest a third way to conceptualize the meaning of facial expression in social interaction.

Studying facial expression in naturally occurring interaction

For a few years, we have been involved in a pilot research focusing on facial expression in everyday social interaction. In launching our research, we had to consider where to get data with adequate technical quality, but also a possibility to observe interaction as

it happens in everyday social life. Despite the many advantages of standardized experimental research settings we wanted to observe interaction as it takes place in ordinary settings, outside the social psychology laboratory. Getting naturalistic data with adequate technical quality that would allow for close observation of the faces of all the participants, however, turned out to be problematic. Our solution was to collect 'quasi-natural' data, where we would provide a setting that would come as close to natural as possible, and the participants would be able to decide themselves the direction that their interaction would take (cf. Chovil 1991; Motley & Camden 1988). We requested dyads of students to come and have a free lunch at a cabinet of a local student cafeteria while their conversation would be recorded. The request was sent in several e-mail lists of local student organizations and resulted in five approximately 30-minute conversations between five dyads of students who knew each other beforehand.

The conversations were recorded with three video-cameras. One of these recorded the facial expressions and gestures of the first participant (A), another one those of the other participant (B), while the third camera recorded both participants interacting. The recordings were channelled through a splitter, to result in a three-part picture where all three shots are shown simultaneously. The view of the third camera is shown in frame 0; the rest of the frames consists of two views showing A and B separately.

In experimental studies, the standardization of the setting is an efficient way to get data that is 'focused' on one particular phenomenon. With naturally occurring data, the contingent quality of social interaction poses a problem. Face-to-face interaction is interwoven of a myriad of strands which are not analytically distinguishable at the outset. Conversation analytical research has provided a set of well documented and cumulative findings that show how everyday conversation is orderly and organized in sequences of actions achieved through adjacent turns of talk by the participants. Thus, instead of standardizing the environment, as in experimental studies, it was possible for us to draw upon previous conversation analytical research to find segments in conversation where a similar action was taking place, where the participants were observably 'doing the same thing' as before.

One recurrent activity on which previous literature was available was *assessment* (e.g. Pomerantz 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin 1992). An assessment involves that the speakers and/or recipients evaluate persons or events that are described in their talk (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987), show their stance towards them. Thus, assessment sequences seemed as good candidate for an environment where the facial expression of the participants could be systematically observable.

Assessments have been the topic of a number of conversation analytical studies. Pomerantz (1984) showed how assessments are often organized as pairs, where the first position assessment by one speaker makes relevant a second position assessment by another speaker. Pomerantz described the ways in which the speakers orient to a preference for an agreement in the second positioned assessment. Recently, Heritage and Raymond (2005) have pursued the analysis of first and second assessments by

exploring the ways in which the participants' claims to knowledge regarding the assessed referents are intertwined with the organization of the assessment sequences.

Rather than focussing on relations between first and second assessments, Goodwin & Goodwin (1987, 1992, M.H. Goodwin 1980) have explored the interaction between speakers and hearers *during* the production of an assessment. They show how an assessment can involve only a segment within the stream of talk (for example, an evaluative adjective such as "beautiful" prefacing a descriptive noun) or, alternatively, it can occupy the whole utterance (for example, in the speaker saying "it was so good" about referent which has been made available in earlier talk) (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987 and 1992). In particular, the studies by Goodwins demonstrate the ways in

which assessments often involve multi-modal expression, involving not only words, but gesture and gaze alike. They show how the collaborative assessment activity is organized in terms of momentary relations between the participants' expressions employing different modalities. The Goodwins (1987, esp. 37) also show how assessment as an activity has phases, proceeding from the emergence of the assessment, via the heightened participation in it, towards trailing off from it. In a case study to be reported here, we will pursue the line of research initiated by their work in conversation analysis. Our research also draws upon some key concepts originating in the early work of Erving Goffman.

Extract 1

- 01 A: Mä luulen et mä en pääse sillä hakemuksella ihan (.)
I think I won't get with that application to quite
 (.)
 02 semmossiin (0.4) tosi konservatiivisiin lehtiin.
such (0.4) vry conservative papers.
 03 (1.4)
 04 B: Se voi kyl pitää paikkansa. .hff hhhe
It may indeed be the case. hff hff hf hf
 05 (0.5)
 06 B: Mut sun kannattais kysyy noilta
But it would be useful for you to ask those
 07 jotka on päässy sinne Hesariin
who have got a job from Hesari
 08 että kuinka #konservatiivista# siellä o,
that how #conse:rative people there are,
 09 (3.0)
 10 A: Mut emmä nyt haluu antaa niille mitenkään
But I don't want to give any false impression
 11 valheellista kuvaa #itsestäni ↓parem↑pi vaan laittaa
of #myself↓bett↑er just send
 12 tollassia [epäasiallisia#.
such [incorrect ones.#
 13 B: [.hhh
 14 (.)
 15 B: ↑N:Q<
Well<
 16 (0.3)
 17 A: @Sitte mä ehkä pääsen sellaseen ↓so#pi#vaan
@Then I'll probably get a job that
 18 ↓paikkaan#.@
↓suits ↓me.@
 19 B: Mmm.
 20 (0.3)

Method

From the transcript of two of the recorded conversations, all assessments were picked out and re-transcribed. For the spoken turns of talk, conversation analytic conventions of transcription were used (see Heritage & Atkinson 1984). The direction of gaze was transcribed using the method developed by Charles Goodwin (1981), and for the facial expressions, a new method of transcription was developed by the researchers.

In the method, three explicit transformations of the basic 'straightfaced' expressions were coded. These included expressions of positive affect (joy/ amusement), negative affect (sadness/disapproval) and surprise. These expressions involved the lifting of the corners of the mouth and sometimes wrinkling of the corners of the eyes (positive), slight lowering of the corners of the mouth, sometimes together with pursing of the lips and frowning (negative), opening the mouth and raising of the eyebrows (surprise).

Extract 1 (continued)

- 21 B: Mut ↑ oothan sje aika konservatiivinen ittekkii.
But you ↑ are quite conservative yourself, aren't you
 22 (0.3)
 23 A: Njii..
Yeah..
 24 (1.0)
 25 A: Eh//kä<
 Fr1
May//be<
 26 (0.8)//(0.2)//(0.2)//(2.8)
 Fr2 Fr3 Fr4
 27 B: t Savon Sanomissa oli (0.7) ei Savon
tch in Savon Sanomat they had (0.7) not in Savon
 28 Sanomissa ku (1.6) Sata#kunnan Kansassa#.
Sanomat but in (1.6) Sata#kunnan Kansa#.
 29 (0.4)
 30 A: Mm//m,
 Fr5
 31 (0.4)
 32 B: Qli kehotettu Samia laittaa #suorat hou°sut°<#. // **Fr6**
They had asked Sami to wear #proper trou°sers<°. #//
 33 (0.4)
 34 A: ↑M//:i//:(h)ṛä//:..
 Fr7 Fr8 Fr9
 ↑W//:(h)ha//:t//:..
 35 (0.7)
 36 A: Ei kau//h[et(h)a(h).]
 Fr10
No that's ha//rr[ibl(h)e(h).]
 37 B: [Et älä si]nne ainakaan hae //t(h)olla.
 Fr11
[So don't app]ly there in any case with //t(h)at one.
 38 A: .hhh Qhoh.
 .hhh qh no.
 39 .hhh Minkä paikan lehti siis Satakunnan
 .hhh at which town is that paper so Satakunnan
 40 Sa[nomat.
 Sa[nomat
 41 B: [Pori. // **Fr12**
 [At Pori.//

This transcription of facial expression turned out to be very useful as an aid for memory and for the classification of data. In particular, the transcripts helped us to consider the detailed timing, relative to talk, of the changes of the facial expressions. At later stages of the analysis, however, our simple system of transcription was not sensitive enough to the variability and momentary fluctuation of facial expression. Rather than using a more complicated coding system – such as the one developed by Ekman and Friesen (1978) – we have worked directly with the visual images, using natural language to describe the variety of expressions. That is the way in which we describe our data also in this chapter.

The preliminary data analysis resulted in a collection of 104 assessment sequences. With assessment sequence we refer to adjacent turns of talk of which the first one is assessing an object and the following speakers have an opportunity to join in the assessment activity. For example, “Well it has been so great in those days” – “My granny thinks it was great” or “It’s so expensive” – “That’s right but it’s so much fun”. In the data, the following turns could be either affiliating or disaffiliating, either assessments or not assessments, either verbal or non-verbal (such as a smile and a nod, for example). Moreover, in some cases the first assessment was done through non-vocal means only.

In analyzing the collection, attention was paid especially on the interplay between what was said and what was displayed by facial expression, and the potential reciprocity of the facial expression of the interactants. The result of the first stage of the analysis was the observation that there are at least two different roles of facial expression in interaction: semiotic and relational. The first one implies that facial expression may emphasize or modify the meaning of what is said in the assessment (cf. Bavelas & Chovil 2000), the second one that facial expression serves to signal and monitor affective cues between the participants.

In the following section, we will illustrate the second phase of the analysis through a case study. The split screen recording technique makes it possible for us to examine in great detail the interplay of the facial expressions of the participants during the production and reception of assessments. By examining the uses of face in an assessment, we hope to complement one further aspect to previous CA analysis on assessments, as well as to outline, in a tentative fashion, a CA-informed approach to the study of facial expression in social interaction.

The case study

In a conversation over lunch, A and B, who are female journalism students, talk about the prospects of A finding a summer job working for a newspaper. A has described her application as a very unconventional one. She thinks that due to its unconventionality, she might not get a job in any conservative newspaper. In Extract 1 above, we are particularly interested in the assessment which is verbally delivered in line 36. But to under-

stand it, we need to explore the talk that precedes it. We will illustrate the facial expression of the participants with captured images from the original video-recording. The location of these framegrabs is marked in the transcript with the abbreviation Fr and the number of the framegrab. (The key to transcription symbols is found in the appendix).

In line 21, as an extension to the topic talk about A's chances to get a summer job, B produces an assessment concerning A. The assessment which characterizes B as "rather conservative" is clearly not in line with the presentational self (Goffman 1955) constructed by B in her earlier talk, and thus constitutes a face threatening act (see also Brown & Levinson 1987). A receives the assessment in classical dispreference format (Pomerantz 1984) involving initial gap (l. 22), a response token that conveys, at most, only partial agreement (l. 23; see Sorjonen 2001; the translation "yeah" is only approximate as "nii" is basically untranslatable into English) and eventually backing down by saying "maybe" (l. 25). Towards the end of "maybe", the participants reach mutual gaze (frame 1) which persist for a while into the long silence that follows (l. 26). After a moment of mutual monitoring, B gazes down (frame 2), only to return her gaze back to A for another moment (frame 3). When returning her gaze, she also nods, apparently in response to A's "maybe". After nodding, she once more withdraws her gaze (frame 4). During these shifts in B's gaze, A maintains solid orientation towards her. The facial expression of the participants is rather minimal. However, there is a strong sense of negative affect in the interaction. The return of B's gaze after she had first withdrawn, and its subsequent withdrawal again creates an impression of momentary helplessness; this impression is in line with the somewhat worried expression in her face (see especially frame 3). The simultaneous persistence of A's gaze at B, accompanied by the lack of facial display and prevailing silence, hints towards aggression. Very shortly after this A starts to purse her lips as if biting them (see frame 5) which appears to convey a feeling of discontent. In Goffmanian terms, what happens could be understood as a moment of "embarrassment" (Goffman 1956) arising from the failure of B to recognize and protect A's projected self.

The moment of negative affect is encapsulated in frames 1-4. The exact timing of the frames relative to the transcript is indicated by the symbol // below each frame. In Frame 0, also the overall setting is shown.

After a silence of a few seconds (during with A also withdraws her gaze), B initiates new action in line 27. As this new action unfolds, it turns out to be a story about a newspaper and a mutual acquaintance. The story involves a shift of a topical focus from the character of B back to reality external to both participants. By initiating the story, B creates



Frame 0 (Line 25. A: Eh//kää-)



Frame 1 (Line 25. B: Eh//kä<)



Frame 2 (Line 25. B: Eh//kä< (0.8)//)



Frame 3 (Line 25. B: Eh//kä< (1.0)//)

a context where A's participation as a story recipient is relevant. Thereby, she steers the interaction away from where the negative affect arose. In Goffmanian terms, what B does can be understood as *corrective action* (Goffman 1955) through which the disruption in the face is mended. A's participation, however, is less than enthusiastic. The following details can be noted.

Much of the beginning part of B's utterance (lines 27-28) is occupied by a repair sequence in which she searches and finally finds the name of a newspaper. B stops the progression of her utterance after having named the

paper (line 28). By this, she makes possible recipient action from A. B's gap of 0.4 sec ensues, towards the end of which the participants withdraw from mutual gaze. The silence is ended by A's response token (line 30), whereby she acknowledges of the name of the paper and/or of the completion of the repair. She chooses minimal vocal action ("Mmm" as opposed to "Joo" tai "okei"). She purses her lips while voicing the acknowledgment (the pursing began a few moments before) and she uses a level intonation contour and therefore appears as unenthusiastic. As a whole, it appears that the negative affect prevails in A's action here. See frame 5.

After a new gap (line 31), B produces what can be recognized as the punch line of her little story. At the end of line 32, her utterance (and the story) is hearably complete. Towards the end of the punch line (at word "suorat"/"proper") B moves her gaze towards A. A reciprocates with her gaze almost immediately. At the beginning of the next word ("housut"/ "trousers") B begins to smile in a "slight" way, keeping her mouth shut, and she raises her eyebrows for a moment. The prosody of this last word

of her utterance is marked: the end of the word is pronounced in a “cut off” manner, creating an impression of something being withheld. After having completed her utterance, B remains silent, maintaining her smile and her gaze on A. See frame 6.

Through her gaze, smile and the movement of her eye-brows, as well as through her prosody, and the discontinuation of her talk, B seems here to be involved in an effort to instigate collaborative *assessment activity* (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987): her comportment suggests that the story just completed involved something remarkable, something to be met

with positive affect. A, however, remains unforthcoming. She reciprocates gaze, but continues the pursing of her lips through the punch line and the ensuing silence. She does not produce any verbal response to B’s story. At this moment, therefore, the participants’ affective positions towards what has been described, as expressed by their words and bodies, are quite divergent. To say the least, A remains unresponsive to B’s effort to instigate collaborative assessment activity.

However, a rather dramatic change in A’s comportment takes place after a silence of 0.4 seconds. She raises her eyebrow, makes her eyes round, starts to smile broadly, and and says “mitä”/ “what”.

In frames 7-9, we go through this change step-by-step. The change in A’s expression begins in the same time with the first sound of her word “mitä”/“what”. During the production of the lengthened “m:”, she raises her eyebrows and makes her eyes round. These facial features are typically associated with surprise. Her mouth, however, remains closed which is associated with the production of the “m” sound. See frame 7.



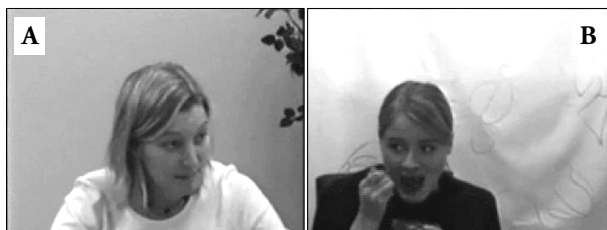
Frame 4 (Line 25. B: Eh//kä< (1.2)//)



Frame 5 (Line 30. A: Mm//m,)



Frame 6 (Line 32. B: #sʊrat hou°sut°<#./)



Frame 7 (Line 32. 32. A: “↑M//:i(h)ṛä:.”)



Frame 8 (Line 32. A: “↑M:i/(h)ṛä:.”)



Frame 9 (Line 32. A: “↑M:i(h)ṛä//.”)

By virtue of the change in A's face during the production of the first sound of her “what”, her affective response – or at least one aspect of that, namely the surprise – to B's story is displayed *before* the lexical element is at such stage that it can be understood.

The expression of A's face evolves quickly. By the time the first vowel of her “mitä”/“what” is completed, A's mouth and eyes have taken the shape of a broad smile. Now, in her facial expression, smile and surprise are blended. See Frame 8.

Thus, in terms of her facial expression, A's affective response to the story about “Sami's trousers” is fully developed by the completion of

the first syllable of her initial lexical response. The dramatic change in A's face – which takes place while the participants are mutually oriented towards each other – constitutes involvement in assessment activity into which B seemed to invite her, through her face and verbal action, at the end of her story. The expression in which smile and surprise are blended remains in A's face until the end of the word “mitä”/“what” and even after that. The participants faces during the production of the last sound of “mitä”/“what” are shown in Frame 9.

The production of “mitä” (“what”) is marked in various ways: pitch is remarkably higher than in A's other talk, there is a laugh particle inserted in the word, both vowels are prolonged. Both syllables bear an intonational accent. A's facial and prosodic action together convey strong affect of amusement and surprise. Prosody and face also constitute A's “mitä” not as a repair initiation (see e.g. Schegloff 1979), but as an expression of the speakers stance towards what she has heard. Accordingly, A responds to A's “mitä” not by repeating or paraphrasing what she has said, but by nodding four times in line 35.

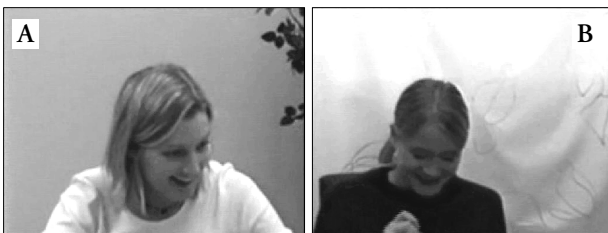
By her action, the facial components of which we see in Frames 7-9, A eventually responds to B's invitation to join in the assessment. She does that with a strong display of affects of amusement and surprise. The participants enter into a moment of shared emotion and heightened mutual participation in the assessment activity (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1987: 28-33). In Goffmanian terms, this moment also involves a successful movement restoration of the mutual recognition of the projected selves of the participants.

The evolvement of B's face is much less dramatic. As pointed out above, she adopted smiling face, with mouth closed, at the end of her story in line 32. During most part of A's "mitä" /"what", B is involved in putting a spoon in her mouth (see frames 7 and 8). After she has removed the spoon at the end of "mitä"/"what", it appears that B's smile is somewhat more intensive than it was before: the corners of her eyes are more wrinkled, and her mouth is longer (frame 9 and 10 as compared to frame 6). In this context, the "intensification" of B's smile is understood as a response to B's facial, prosodic and lexical action.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 33) show how assessments can have a recognizable *peak* or *climax*, during which the interactants' participation in it is most intensive. It appears that lines 34-35, visually represented in frame 7-9, incorporate such peak. Here occurs the dramatic change in A's facial expression. The prosody of her talk is more marked than elsewhere, as the pitch is here clearly higher than in talk that precedes or comes after. However, in terms of words, the assessment has not yet been delivered: the *assessment adjective* (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987:6-7) "kauheeta"/"horri-



Frame 10 Line 36. A: Ei kau//heet(h)a(h.).



Frame 11 (Line 37. B: hae //t(h)olla.)



Frame 12 (Line 41. B: Pori.//)

ble” that constitutes the core of the *assessment segment* (ibid.) is only produced in line 36. At that point, the participants’ facial expression remains rather stable, preserving the features that were established at the beginning of A’s “mitä”/“what” in line 34, and the pitch of A’s talk has come down, closer to her normal range. Frame 11 shows the facial configuration at the end of the first syllable of “kauheeta”/“horrible”.

In overlap with A’s assessment adjective, B begins an utterance which is marked as an inference from the story (through turn initial “et”/“so”) and which, by reinvoking A’s job application as a topic, also ties the story to the talk that preceded it. Through her utterance, which involves a joking advice for A not to apply to the newspaper in question, B indirectly shows that she is in agreement with A’s initial line in presentation of self as an unconventional person, thereby adding a new layer to what might be called her corrective action. Through this move in topic and action, B treats the peak of the assessment activity as having been passed.

In the middle part of her utterance in line 37, at the beginning of the Finnish word “ainakaa” (translatable in this context “in any case”), and shortly after A has completed her assessment adjective, B withdraws her gaze from A, thereby dissolving the intensity of the mutual involvement. A’s gaze withdrawal follows at the end of “ainakaa”/“in any case”: she adopts a “middle distance” gaze in B’s direction but below her face. Frame 12 shows the configuration just after A’s gaze withdrawal. Thus, by the end of line 37, when the participants have moved verbally to a new action after the assessment, they have also dissolved their mutual visual participation.

Slight smile, however, remains in both participants’ faces even after they have withdrawn from the mutual gaze. The continuity of the smiles incorporates the continuity of the participants’ affective state, originating in the assessment, and of their affective involvement in the referent of their talk. The mutual withdrawal of gaze brings about de-intensification of this affect (cf. Kendon 1990, 76-81)

The smiles of the participants in frame 11 (along with the laugh token in “t(h)olla”/“t(h)at one”) are associated with the new action (joking advice) that B has initiated. However, the smiles in the participants’ faces are the “same” smiles that begun as constituents of the assessment activity in lines 32 (for B) and 34 (for A): the smiles did not disappear between the two actions. Therefore, there seems to be a particular *continuity in the parties’ facial expression and the affect that it incorporates*: while the verbal action and an aspect of the topic change, the affect, as displayed by the participants’ faces, in this case remains the same.

The verbal assessment action is briefly resumed in line 38 through A’s exclamatory “ohoh”/“oh no”. Right after this, B glances briefly at A and A reciprocates the look. A then (l.39) moves to yet another action, asking where the newspaper appears. Simultaneously with the onset of the question, A adopts “straight face”, i.e. ceases to smile. B responds to the A’s question in overlap (line 38). During the production of B’s answer, the participants once more adopt mutual gaze. While shifting her gaze at A, B

also adopts straight face. Thereby, the affective involvement of the participants is finally resolved.² The final non-affective state of mutual monitoring is presented in frame 12.

Summary of the results of the case study

What we have presented here is a case study which as such does not warrant any generalizable conclusions. However, the following hypotheses regarding the uses of face in assessment activity can be presented.

1. It appears that *face is involved in the management of the assessment activity*.
2. Along with words and prosody, *face incorporates the participants' affective involvement in the referent being assessed* (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1987, 9). Through their faces in frames 7–11, the participants displayed an affective stance (as “funny” and “surprising”) to the referent of their assessment.
3. *Facial displays, and lack of them, also incorporate the participants' momentary affective relation during the assessment activity*. In our example, an embarrassed facial display (frames 2, 3 and 4), and asymmetry of facial display (in frame 6) seemed to incorporate lack of mutual affective involvement between the participants, whereas symmetry in positive facial displays (frames 7–10) seemed to incorporate (restoration of) such involvement.
4. The participants' facial displays are *coordinated with each other, with their gaze, and with the unfolding of their verbal contributions to the interaction*. Positive facial display, like the one in frame 6, in a setting where the participants maintain mutual gaze and where a second position action by a co-participant is due, can serve as an invitation to a corresponding positive display, as an affective component to the second position action, from this co-participant (cf. Goodwin MH 1980; Goodwin 1986; Ruusuvuori 2001). In our example, the relinquishment of the mutual positive facial expression (frame 12) is preceded by mutual withdrawal of gaze (frame 11) and move into a new verbal action.
5. Face seems capable of *extending the temporal boundaries* of the assessment activity. In our example, the smile of one participant adumbrated the assessment activity before the verbal assessment activity was begun (frame 6). The peak of the assessment activity was reached through means of face and prosody (frames 7–9) before the key lexical components of the assessment were delivered (frame 10). The smiles of the participants also maintained their affective involvement in the referent after the verbal assessment had been completed (frame 11). Thus, it appears that the temporal organization of affective involvement, as displayed

2 A new spell of affective evaluation follows after a short gap, but the analysis of that is not necessary for the purposes of this paper

through participants' faces, is intrinsically related to, but does not coincide with, the temporal organization of the turns at talk.

Conclusion

Using video recorded data that was analysed through means of conversation analysis, we have in this chapter explored the ways in which facial expression contributes to, and is shaped by, moment-by-moment social interaction. Our point of departure was Bavelas and Chovil's conception of facial expression that focuses on the communicative functions rather than expressive properties of facial displays. We searched to complement their ideas with the methods and research tradition of conversation analysis. In Table two below, we offer a tentative summary of the line of research that this case study might suggest for future work.

Table 2: Three approaches to facial expression

| | EKMAN ET AL. | CHOVIL & BAVELAS | CA |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Key aspect of facial expression | Output of internal psycho-physical state | Communicative resource | Interactional resource |
| Meaning of face | Key expressions have inherent meanings | Meaning arises from linguistic context | Meaning arises from moment-by-moment interaction process |

The difference between the CA-informed approach and the approach of Bavelas & Chovil is in the scale of the analysis. The difference is in the scale of the analysis. It appears that Bavelas and Chovil contextualize facial expressions in "complete" linguistic actions, such as asking questions or giving a personal reaction to what is spoken (see Chovil 1991), whereas our case study, inspired in particular by the earlier work of Goodwin and Goodwin (1987, 1992) sought to contextualize these expressions in the step-by-step unfolding of one particular action, assessment.

The split screen video was a necessary resource for our analysis: without it, the observations reported here would not have been possible. Transcription of the video was a very useful tool during many stages of the analysis. The final analysis and the presentation of the results were greatly aided by framegrab techniques made available in current film editing programs. However, the technology is only one part of the resources that are needed to do video analysis. Our research was informed by the analytical perspective that arises from earlier conversation analytical studies on assessments, from the research tradition of conversation analysis in general, and from the related studies of Bavelas, Chovil, Fridlund and others. This analytical perspective amounts to "mental optics", as it were, which are just as essential as the optics of our video cameras, for observation of social interaction.

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