

## COORDINATED ENTRY INTO SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

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### **Abstract**

This paper studies openings of service encounters in food shops. Based on video data in Catalan, Swiss German, Finland Swedish and Finnish, it contributes to the general understanding of openings of face-to-face encounters by highlighting the systematic multimodal and sequential organization of sighting, gazing, greeting, walking and moving into the reason for the encounter. More specifically, the paper casts light on openings in institutional settings by investigating the methodic, coordinated achievement of entry into business and the contingencies involved. The paper shows how the availability of the salesperson is displayed for the customer and how s/he orients to it, rendering visible how 'service' is accountably offered and recognized.

**The Coordinated Entry into Service Encounters in Food Shops:  
Managing Interactional Space, Availability, and Service during Openings**

**Joint Coordination of Openings of Service Encounters**

Openings of service encounters raise not only the general issue of how participants coordinate their joint entry into business, but also how they make their rights and obligations publicly accountable from the very first steps into the setting, projecting the actions that initiate and constitute service, such as requests and their compliance. By studying openings of service encounters in food shops in a diversity of sites in Europe, this paper focuses on how customers and salespersons organize their joint entry into the encounter through mutual gaze, greetings, and walking along the counter. The paper shows how these embodied conducts organize the progression toward the “service point” – that is, the spatially, bodily and sequentially organized point at which making a first request becomes relevant. This progression is both systematic and subject to a number of contingencies which might delay it and which further exhibit the common orientation of the participants toward what constitutes “service” but also “work” in this setting. In the analysis, we pay particular attention to the way in which the (un)availability of the salesperson is displayed and treated, occasioning early vs. late and smooth vs. problematic progressions toward the beginning of the service.

**State of the Art**

Openings constitute one of the first analytical foci of conversation analysis, owing to the pioneering work of Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986), who systematically described the

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practices through which participants achieve their coordinated entry into telephone conversations. This sequential environment is the *locus* where the availability of the participants is established (in responses to summonses, Schegloff, 1968) and where they identify themselves (Schegloff, 1979), recognizing either who they are or the relevance of their membership categories for the incipient encounter (Duranti, 1997; Sacks, 1972; Zimmermann, 1987). This is done through an ordered series of sequences, including how-are-you and greetings (Schegloff, 1986).

Whereas openings have been abundantly studied in telephone conversations, they are less analyzed in face-to-face encounters (but see, in addition to those mentioned below, Mondada & Schmitt, 2010 for a series of multimodal studies). Video data for the study of openings have revealed the importance of the co-participants' visual appearance, for the establishment of a shared perceptual field is essential for openings (Duranti, 1997, p. 68). It includes practices for sighting, catching the eye and mutually seeing each other, preceding what Kendon & Ferber (1973) call "distant salutations" (head toss, hands waving, and eyebrow flash), and, after the participants have approached each other, "close salutations" (smiles and nods, verbal greetings, body contact). Thus, in face-to-face encounters, and especially in public or institutional spaces, approaching each other is a fundamental aspect of the openings that is implemented in mobile trajectories within space (Hazel & Mortensen, 2013; Mondada, 2009; De Stefani & Mondada, this issue) or by entering a room where the encounter, consultation, or visit will take place (Heath, 1981, 1986; Robinson, 1998; Pillet-Shore, 2008; Oloff, 2010).

Openings in institutional settings in which unacquainted persons interact together have been described as adopting a specialized format with respect to ordinary conversation (Drew & Heritage, 1992), often reduced and compacted (Zimmerman, 1987), favoring the establishment of the relevant asymmetric categories (such as service seeker/service provider)

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and the formulation of the reason for the interaction. This is also the case with shop encounters.

Openings in shop encounters have been examined from diverse sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and interactional perspectives (Aston, 1988; Dausenschön-Gay, 2009; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005), sometimes within a comparative approach (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Traverso, 2001; Zorzi et al., 1990), often related to the establishment of rapport and social relations with customers (Ryoo, 2005; Placencia, 2004). Video analyses of openings in service and shop encounters remain rare (but see Clark & Pinch, 2010; De Stefani, in press; Hausendorf & Mondada, 2017; Hazel & Mortensen, 2014; Mondada, 2017; Sorjonen & Raevaara, 2014), and show the necessity of developing an integrative multimodal analysis of features including mutual sighting, approaching, nodding and smiling, crucial for the establishment of the first contact and the progressive arrangement of the interactional space. Furthermore, the articulation between embodied features of the organization of openings and the accountability and public visibility of institutional issues, and their possibly divergent management by the participants in the very first seconds of the encounter, remain largely understudied.

In this study of openings of shop encounters, we examine the way customers entering the shop and salespersons orient to and project the imminent service activities. In this context, the mobility of the participants, their body positionings in space, as well as their mutual glances and greetings show how both parties orient to each other as “customer” and “salesperson” and display their relative normative expectations. The paper pays special attention to how the initiation of service intertwines with the unfolding of competing activities that the salesperson may be occupied with when the customer enters the shop. It reveals that openings are the locus of early, sometimes diverging, negotiations about expectations and entitlements concerning service.

## **Data and Aims of the Analyses**

This paper relies on an extensive collection of video recorded shop encounters in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Various types of shops (kiosks, bakeries and cheese shops) have been recorded with multiple video cameras. The shopkeepers and sales personnel have agreed to the recording, and customers have given their written informed consent in situ. The participants have given their permission for the use of videos, transcripts and images for scientific purposes.

For the present study, a subset of data was selected in order to ensure a comparative analyses of openings, based on the criteria that they a) grant the analyst visual access to the shop entrance door, the outside window and the counter, b) have a similar architecture and store design, with a counter running perpendicular to the entrance door, constraining in similar ways the participants' walk along the counter, and c) sell similar types of food products. This resulted in a selection of bakeries and cheese shops in Barcelona, Basel, and the Finnish cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vaasa.

The conversation analytic video analyses of the data aim at capturing the methodic practices for achieving a coordinated entry into the service encounter by the two parties – the customer and the salesperson. In particular, we describe how the customer's trajectory of entering the shop and approaching the counter is organized with regard to either the reciprocal movement of the salesperson or her displays of unavailability. While often the

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<sup>1</sup> The corpus 'int-counters' includes recordings in 15 European cities, in 12 languages.

It has been constituted within the Finland Distinguished Professor project of Lorenza Mondada, "Multimodality: Reconsidering language and action through embodiment," funded by the Academy of Finland and hosted by the Centre of Excellence in Intersubjectivity in Interaction at the University of Helsinki.

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salespersons make themselves maximally available for the customer, they might also be engaged in other tasks, such as organizing the products, doing paperwork, etc. The relative unavailability of the salesperson can be oriented to by the participants in ways that transform the temporality and sequentiality of the opening as well as exhibit the rights and obligations of the two parties. The analysis of these issues contributes to a better understanding of what is at stake in openings of institutional encounters, including the question how “service” is recognizably accomplished in situ at the completion of these openings.

The analysis first focuses on cases in which the customer entering the shop sees that the salesperson is maximally available, and ready to welcome him/her. In other cases, however, the customer entering the shop discovers that the salesperson is busy with another task: this occasions mutual adjustments, delaying the first request. While most often this momentary unavailability is unproblematic, the delay in the fulfillment of the service can be normatively oriented to by the customer and transforms the opening sequence in notable ways – for instance, with the customer initiating a second greeting sequence that prompts a re-opening.

### **Being Welcomed with Maximal Availability: A Smooth Entry into the Encounter**

The salesperson can welcome the customer entering the shop by displaying maximal availability for service. Thereby, s/he also creates an opportunity for the customer to initiate a next action, e.g. the first request. In this section, we demonstrate how this coordination is locally achieved, first, as a symmetrical stepwise entry into the encounter, and second, as a smooth progression in which the customer takes some time before the request, and the salesperson adjusts to that.

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## Organizing Reciprocity

As the customer steps in, the salesperson can welcome him/her with maximal availability by walking along the counter in such a coordinated way that when they stop, they face each other. This point in time and space at which both parties establish a stable mutual orientation and the relevance of beginning the business encounter with the first request is what we call the “service point” (Fig.1.3). The first extract, in a cheese shop in Basel, shows this co-orientation of both participants:

```
(1) (FRO_CH_BS_110415_45.55) (Swiss German)
1      (1.0)          * (0.6)•(0.3)
  sal   >>at the counter*pivots twd window->
  sal   >>gazes at wind/CUS----•gazes away->
2  SAL  so# ↑j*etzte.+
      so now
  sal   ->*standing->
  cus   +opens door->
  fig   #fig.1.1
```



1.1

```
3      (0.5)•±(1.2)
  sal   ->•gazes at CUS->
  cus   ±gazes at SAL->
4  SAL  grüet[zi,]
      hello
5  CUS  [grü]+tzi,±
      hello
  cus   -->+walks in->
  cus   ->±gazes at products->
6      (0.3)*(1.3)          *±(0.4)#(0.5)±(0.8)+(0.8)±+(0.6)
  sal   ->*walks along ct*stands at counter->
  cus   --->±gazes SAL--±at prod----±at SAL->
  cus   -->+pivots+stands->
  fig   #fig.1.2
```



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1.2



1.3

```

7  CUS      °ich ±#hät gärn ein Camembert.°•*
      I would like a Camembert
      sal    °2H crossed over the scales---°
      sal    °gazes fwd-->>
      sal    °starts walking-->>
      cus    ->±gazes at prod-->>
      fig    #fig.1.3
8  CUS      (1.0)+
      cus    ->+walks along the counter-->>
  
```

As the customer approaches the shop from outside, the salesperson watches through the window and sees him stop at the door (1.1). Before he opens it, the salesperson produces an utterance that calls attention to his imminent arrival (1.2, Fig.1.1) in a kind of self-talk that might be overheard by the colleague in the back of the shop.

As soon as the customer enters the shop, he gazes at the salesperson, and mutual gaze is immediately established (1.3). As the customer is still at the doorstep, they exchange greetings (1.4–5). The greeting is initiated by the salesperson, but with the customer's overlapping greeting turn, simultaneity is achieved. Greetings are one of the rare actions that are preferably done in chorus rather than in subsequent turns (Pillet-Shore, 2008, 2012, p. 389), and here they manifest the smooth, reciprocal coordination of the opening. As the customer walks in (1.5), the salesperson also begins to walk along the counter (1.6), in such a way that they progressively approach one another (1.6, Fig.1.2). When the customer pivots toward the counter and again gazes at the salesperson, she is ready to serve him, standing and adopting a posture similar to the “servant posture” (Svinhufvud, in press), with both hands crossed over the scales (1.7, Fig.1.3), displaying not being occupied with manual tasks, in

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other words, being fully available. At this “service point,” the customer utters his first request (1.7).

This fragment shows how the customer and the salesperson engage in a smoothly coordinated joint entry into the encounter. The salesperson monitors the arrival of the customer when he is still on the street, and turns toward him even before he opens the door. As a result, the customer sees that the salesperson is immediately available and is oriented to him as he enters. Next, their mutual gaze, greetings, and walk along the counter are adjusted in a reciprocal way, producing a symmetrical mutual approach, completed with reaching the “service point.” At this spatial, body-configurational and sequential point in the interaction, the coordinated entry into the exchange is completed (both participants stop, and face each other) and the beginning of the shop encounter (orienting to the “reason” for the interaction: a request) occurs.

The availability and readiness displayed by the salesperson is a timely achievement based on monitoring and pre-adjusting to the arrival of the customer. This is visible in the next excerpt recorded in a bakery in Espoo, where the salesperson is taking a drink. As soon as the salesperson sees the customer approaching, she takes a last sip (1.1) and puts aside her glass (1.2):

```
(2) (BAK_FIN_ESP_210415_0.51.23_CLI15) (Finnish)
1      (0.7)•(0.4) •(0.4)°(0.4)•(0.8)°(0.2)*(0.8)•
   sal  >>walks twd counter-----*stands->
   sal  °gz door°gz at drink°gz at CUS-----°gz at drink->
   sal  °,,,,,,°,drinks->
   cus  >>approaches door->
2      (0.3)+(0.2)°(0.8)°(0.2)•*+ °(0.4)+(0.1)°±
   sal  °.....°glass down°.....°rubs hands->
   sal  ->°gz at CUS->
   sal  ->*walks->
   cus  ->+opens door-----+steps in+walks twd counter->
   cus  ±gz at SAL->
3      (0.9)
4  SAL  ↑moi [moi.
        hello hello
5  CUS  [heissan.
        hi
6      (0.4)±(0.7)°(0.3)+*(0.3)+*•
   cus  ->±gz at products->
```

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```
cus                ->+pivots+stands by counter->
sal                ->°crosses fingers-->>
sal                ->*pivots*stands by counter->
sal                ->°gz at products->
7      (0.7)•(0.1)†(0.4)†
sal                ->°gz at CUS->
cus                †points†...->
8 CUS  ot•etaat *sieltä jo•tai hyvää.
      let's take something good from here
cus                ->†
sal                ->°gz at products--°gz at CUS-->>
sal                ->*steps twd products-->>
```

When the salesperson looks up and sees a customer approaching the door (1.1), she takes a last sip from her drink, alternating her gaze between the drink and the door, and places her glass on top of the showcase just before the customer arrives (1.2). As soon as the customer enters (1.2), they establish mutual gaze and exchange partially overlapping greetings (1.4–5). As the customer approaches, the salesperson walks along the counter: the two participants stop at the counter at exactly the same time and pivot toward each other (1.6), mutually achieving the service point. They then both turn their gaze at the products, projecting the first request (1.7–8).

Here, the salesperson is in the middle of a competing activity when the customer enters. She manages to finish in time to be fully available as he enters, enabling the participants to meet each other at the counter in a symmetrical manner. As a result, drinking does not become visible to the customer and does not interfere with the imminent business.

In sum, these initial excerpts show how maximal availability is practically and systematically achieved by the salesperson pre-orienting toward the imminent arrival of the customer. They also show how the joint entry into the sales encounter is reciprocally coordinated by the participants, mutually adjusting the stepwise progression to the counter and the “service point.”

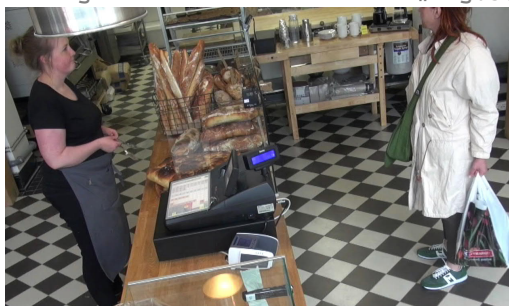
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### Buying time before the request

When the salesperson is visibly immediately available for the customer, it may be that the customer still takes time to inspect the products before making a request. In this case, the customer can postpone the arrival at the “service point” by withholding the final steps toward the relevant area along the counter. This preparatory delay occurs in the next two excerpts, the first in Finland Swedish (Vaasa) and the second in Swiss German (Basel).

We join the action in the Vaasa bakery as, similar to the previous cases, the salesperson monitors the arrival of the customer:

```
(3) (BAK_FIN_VAA_1.22.01 CLI15) (Finland Swedish)
1      (3.3)          +(0.3)±
  sal  >>gazing out of the window->
  cus  >>walking past window+enters vestibule->
  cus  ±panning gaze->
2      (1.6)•+(0.4)•
  sal  ->•.....•gaze at CUS->
  cus  ->+walks to counter->
3      (0.6)*(0.3)±*(0.3)
  sal  *.....*walks twd products->
  cus  ->±gaze at SAL->
4  SAL  hej[:.
      hi
5  CUS  [hæ•j.•
      hi
      cus  ->±gaze at products-->>
      sal  ->•...•gaze at products->
6      (1.0)°(0.9)°(0.1)*
      sal  °.....°holds utensils->
      sal  ->*stands by products->
7      (0.8)+(0.4)•(0.3)•#(0.7)      •(1.1)
  cus  ->+stands in front of counter->
  sal  ->•.....•gaze at CUS•at products->
  fig  #fig.3.1
```



3.1

```
8  CUS  j:a tar den:•+ där.      •*#
      I'll take that there
      sal  ->•gaze at CUS•at products-->>
      cus  ->+two steps fwd-->>
      sal  ->*two steps-->>
      fig  #fig.3.2
```

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3.2

After entering the shop, the customer walks toward the counter while simultaneously looking around (1.1–2). The salesperson gazes at her (1.2) and starts walking along the counter too (1.3). The shop is rather spacious, and it takes some time (1.1–7) for the customer to arrive at the counter (1.7). The salesperson greets first, and the customer reciprocates the greeting in overlap. In the meantime, the salesperson turns her gaze at the products (1.5) and takes the utensils in her hand (1.6), displaying readiness to serve the customer.

The customer almost reaches the counter, but keeps a distance from it (1.7; Fig.3.1). The salesperson first glances at the customer (1.7), but turns her gaze back to the products, as the customer does not yet produce a request. When the customer finally makes the request, she takes two steps toward the counter (1.8; Fig.3.2). The salesperson responds by starting to move toward the requested products.

The salesperson not only displays availability, but also adjusts to the progression of the customer. Contrary to the previous cases, the customer stops before reaching the counter. By keeping at a distance from the counter, she halts the progressivity of the encounter, thereby gaining time to inspect and choose a product, and delaying the request. As she is finally ready to produce the request, she also steps forward to the counter, completing the face-to-face convergent positioning of both participants, now establishing the “service point.”

Managing some distance from the counter (vs. reaching it) is a customer’s methodic practice, as attested in another shop:

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```

(4) (FRO_CH_BS_110415_13.18) (Swiss German)
1      (2.8)+(0.3)      •(1.2)+(0.7)
  sal  >>stands, hands on counter->
  sal  >>looks thr win*gazes at CUS->
  cus   +opens door-----+walks in->
2  CUS  gu[+ete tag
      good morning
3  SAL  [+griezi
      hello
  cus   ->+gazes at SAL->
4      (0.4)*+(0.2)*+(0.5)*(0.7)+(0.4)
  sal   ->*.....*walks along counter->
  cus   ->+gazes at cheese->
  sal   -->*
  cus   ->+stops, standing at distance->
5  SAL  was dörfs [sein?
      what can that be
6  CUS  [ich hä+tti *gärn (0.3) e+hm      +
      I would like      ehm
  sal   ->*stops at counter facing CUS->
  cus   ->+gazes at SAL-----+gazes at cheese-->>
  cus   ->+1 step twd ctr+stands-->>
7      (1.4)†(0.2) †acht: so:: (0.7) boutons
      eight so      ((name of cheese))
  cus   †.....†points-->>

```

Again, the salesperson monitors the arrival of the customer and displays availability by gazing and beginning to move in her direction. When the customer enters, the participants exchange greetings almost simultaneously, and the customer walks in, gazing at the products. She stops at some distance from the counter (1.4), still turned toward the products. The salesperson initiates the transition to the request while still walking (1.5), probably orienting to her own late arrival at the counter. When the customer responds with a request (1.6), she also gazes at the salesperson. She begins her turn with some hesitation: as she projects but not yet utters the name of the product, she steps to the counter – in such a way that when she utters the quantity and the name, her body has fully reached the counter, and she points at the showcase.

As in the previous case, stopping and maintaining a distance from the counter is a practice employed by the customer to buy time to inspect the products, delaying the request. When finally placing the order, the customers in both extracts step closer to the counter so that they now face the salesperson and establish the “service point.” Whereas in the first collection of cases, this position was symmetrically reached by the participants, in this second

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collection, the progression into the encounter is delayed by the customer, while the salesperson adjusts to it by waiting, yet still displaying readiness to receive a request. This demonstrates the organizational importance of walking steps in the management of the – literally stepwise – progressivity of the encounter and the establishment of the parties as “buyer” and “seller.”

### **Discovering the Unavailability of the Salesperson:**

#### **A Delayed Entry into the Encounter**

The customer entering the shop does not always see a salesperson who is ready for her: instead of just waiting for the next customer, the salesperson may be engaged in a variety of tasks that pertain to their job (as well as in more private activities). The participants manage the non-immediate availability of the salesperson by adjusting their progression into the encounter, within specific forms of multiactivity (Haddington, Keisanen, Mondada, & Nevile, 2015). Various temporal adjustments are observable on the side of the salesperson, who can smoothly and immediately complete her task, suspend it later or suspend it with some delay, after brief continuation. These options reveal different appraisals of the time the salesperson can legitimately take before displaying her availability, and the way she manages them in an accountable manner for the customer. In response, the customer either aligns with the delay or claims his/her rights to be served.

#### **Quickly Completing the Ongoing Task**

Upon arrival of the customer, the salesperson can display both the fact that she is engaged in some work, and that she orients toward the imminent service, by promptly completing the

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other task. This double orientation is a way of balancing between other tasks and service while manifesting both as pertaining to the professional duties of the salesperson.

We join the Espoo bakery when the salesperson is reordering some pens and paper notebooks on the counter as the customer enters:

```
(5) (BAK_FIN_ESP_210415_1.01.48 CLI20) (Finland Swedish)
1      (4.4)°(0.6)+      (0.6)+(0.6)°
  sal  >>walks btw shelves and counter->
  sal  °places 1st item-----°moves 2nd item->
  cus  +opens door+steps in->
2      (0.1)•*(0.9)+(0.2)± (0.5)°(0.2)•(0.4)
  sal  ->°gz twd counter-----°gz at CUS->
  sal  ->*turns and walks twd counter->
  sal  °adjusts 3rd item->
  cus  ->+walks along counter-->>
  cus  ±gz at counter->
3  CUS  mo*°i,
        hi
  sal  ->*stands at counter->
  sal  ->°adjusts 4th item->
4  SAL  ↑moi moi.
        hello hello
5      (0.2)°±(0.4)°(0.1)
  sal  ->°.....°hand still on counter->
  cus  ->±gz at café area->
6  CUS  munk *och ±kaf•fe.°      *
        a doughnut and a coffee
  cus  ->±gz at counter-->>
  sal  ->*step aligned with CUS*pivots-->>
  sal  ->°gz at products-->>
  sal  ->°fetches product-->>
```

At the beginning of the extract, the salesperson is organizing some small items on the worktop behind the counter, with her back to the door. When the customer enters, the salesperson places an item on the worktop and moves a second item from the worktop to the top of the counter (1.1). Turning toward the counter also allows her to laterally perceive the customer approaching. She moves a third item lying on the counter, and directs her gaze at the customer (1.2). The customer greets and, while responding, the salesperson moves yet a fourth item (1.3). She finishes the movement just after her own greeting (1.5), and just in time before the customer's request.

Here, the salesperson times the finishing up of her task with the greetings, warranting the smooth progression of the encounter toward making a request. This coordination allows



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for multiactivity, that is, the momentaneous simultaneity of continuing manual tasks and welcoming the customer. Once again, the salesperson has time to rest her hand on the counter (1.5) just before the request comes. In this way, she manages, despite the competing task, to display availability to attend the customer.

### Continuing and then Suspending the Ongoing Task

In other cases, the salesperson might continue the ongoing task, suspending it only after a while. This makes the continuation and suspension of the task visible for the customer.

We join the next opening in Helsinki, as a couple of customers enter while the salesperson is busy organizing the products in a refrigerated cabinet, with her back to the door:

```
(6) (BAK_FIN_HEL 2.58.36 CLI50.1_CLI50.2) (Finnish)
1      $(1.2)%(0.7)&+(0.5)      &(0.3)
   sal  >>organizing the cabinet->
   cu2  $opens door->
   cu2   ->%walks to counter->
   cu2   &gaze at SAL&panning gaze->
   cu1   +walks to counter->
2  CU2  .nff &
   cu2  ->&...->
3      (0.3)±(1.0)$±†(0.3)•
   cu2   ->$
   cu1   ±.....±gaze at SAL->
   cu1   †holds door->
   sal   •...->
4      (0.3)°*(0.3)•#(0.3)% °
   sal  ->°hands in cabinet-°closing cabinet->
   sal  ->*body torque->
   sal  ->°gaze at customers->
   cu2   ->%stands by counter->
   fig   #fig.6.1
5  SAL  hei.•±&#
   hi
   sal  ->•,,,,,->
   cu1  ->±,,,,,->
   cu2  ->&...->
   fig  #fig.6.2
```

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6.1



6.2

```

6  CU1    he•±i.†
      hi
      sal  ->•gaze at products->
      cu1  ->±gaze at products-->>
      cu1    ->†
      cu2    ->&gaze at SAL->
7      (.)
8  CU2    he&i.&
      hi
      cu2  ->&, ,&gaze at products->
9      (0.3)*(0.5)°*(0.4)•(1.0)+(0.3)&(0.7)&
      sal    ->°
      sal    ->*step--*walks to counter->
      sal    ->•gaze ahead->
      cu1    ->+stands by counter-->>
      cu2    ->&gz SAL&products->
10     (0.9)•(1.5)      •(0.2)°(0.4)°•&
      sal    ->•gaze at CU1•at CU2->
      sal    °.....°hands crossed-->>
      sal    ->•gaze at CU1-->>
      cu2    ->&gaze at CU1-->>
11  CU1    hyvä& tuoksu.*
      nice smell
      cu2    ->&gaze at products-->>
      sal    ->*stands by counter-->>

```

As the two customers enter the shop, the salesperson is fully turned toward the refrigerated cabinet, with her hands busy reordering products inside it.

As they enter, one of the customers gazes at the salesperson and then starts panning through the shop (1.1 onward). She produces an audible sniff (1.2) and the shop door also makes a small click when it closes (1.3). Both work as summonses, followed by the salesperson turning her gaze and upper body toward the door (1.3–4) and greeting the customers (1.5). Before greeting, however, the salesperson already starts to close the sliding door of the cabinet (1.4). The turning toward the customers is performed as a body torque (Schegloff, 1998), with her lower body still facing the cabinet and her hands guiding the door

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(Fig.6.1). This displays her involvement in multiactivity: she has not yet abandoned her previous task, but is still primarily oriented to performing it (cf. Robinson, 1998). The customers return the greeting (1.5–6) – in this case without overlap – and start looking at the products in the shop (1.6 and 8).

Already before the first customer greets, the salesperson turns again to the cabinet (1.5; Fig.6.2). Then she takes a step toward the counter, closes the cabinet door and starts walking toward the area behind the counter (1.9). She assumes her position behind the counter while the customers continue looking at various products. Customer 1 makes a general positive comment (1.11) but does not yet proceed to a request. The salesperson ends up waiting for it for quite a while (see the continuation in Svinhufvud, in press).

Here, the salesperson does not see the customers entering. It is only after audible sounds indicating their entrance that she turns to them. From this moment on, the participants make eye contact with each other in various constellations: Customer 1 and the salesperson establish a mutual gaze (1.3–5) but Customer 2 turns her gaze back to the salesperson only after she has started turning back toward the cabinet (1.6). The salesperson welcomes the customers by greeting them, while at the same time maintaining her embodied orientation toward the uncompleted task, which she continues for a while before making herself fully available for service.

A similar continuous engagement in the ongoing task is observable in the next fragment:

```
(7) (BAK_FIN_ESP_210415_1.09.48_CLI23) (Finnish)
1      (8.6)+(0.2)°
    sal  >>reading a notebook->
    sal      °runs finger through the notebook->
    cus      +opens door->
2      (1.2)+(1.0)±
    cus  ->+walks twd counter->
    cus      ±gz at counter->
3      (1.5)°(0.7)•(0.3)+(0.3)±•°(0.4)
    sal  ->°stops finger-----°pushes notebook aside->
    sal      •gz at CUS---•gz at notebook->
```

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```

cus                ->+arrives at counter->
cus                ->±gz at SAL->
4 SAL      ↑moi mo:[:i.
             hello
5 CUS      [+mo:±i.•
             hi
cus        ->+stands at counter->
cus        ->±gz at products-->>
sal        ->*gz at CUS->
6          (0.3)°(0.9)°•(0.2)†
sal        ->°,,,,,°adjusts clothing->
sal        ->*gz at counter->>
cus        †points->
7          (0.2)°
sal        ->°fetches product->>
8 CUS      mä† otan tuom munkin.
             I take the doughnut
cus        ->†

```

The salesperson is reading a document that lies on top of the counter. As the customer walks in, the salesperson is running her finger through some items on the page (1.1–3), not gazing at the customer. When the customer then passes by her along the counter, she stops reading but keeps her finger on the notebook. She raises her gaze at the customer and then pushes the notebook aside (1.3). That is, she maintains her primary bodily orientation until the customer arrives right in front of her, and then she gazes at him. At this point, she suspends the competing action. The salesperson and the customer do not establish actual mutual gaze, but while the salesperson puts away the notebook they produce overlapping greetings. The partial simultaneity of the greetings is enabled by the salesperson's lengthening of the duplicated greeting (1.4; Pillet-Shore, 2012, p. 389). The salesperson then puts her hands down and adjusts her clothing, as if preparing for service (1.6). The customer orients to this as having established the service point: he points at a product and makes a request (1.7–8).

Notice that here the customer abstains from greeting until the moment he has arrived at the counter; the customer adapts his entry with regard to the salesperson's current occupations and display of (un)availability. By waiting, the customer not only adjusts to the salesperson's ongoing task but also recognizes it as legitimate, and collaboratively delays the progressivity of the encounter to adapt to it – instead of e.g. entitling himself to interrupt the

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task. Again, the final convergence of both participants, achieving the opening of the encounter, emerges as a situated, collective achievement.

### Adding to and then Suspending the Ongoing Task

Instead of visibly suspending or finishing the ongoing task, the salesperson can also prolong it, not just continuing it, but further expanding it with additional movements, delaying the service. In the next example we describe how this is managed by the participants.

We join the Basel cheese shop as the salesperson is packing a half piece of cheese: this task is successively organized in a series of gestures wrapping the piece and putting it aside together with the second half (see arrows in the margins), before serving the customer.

```
(8) (FRO_CH_BS_110415_1.29.00) (Swiss German)
1      *•(0.3) •#(1.0)*(0.1)+±(0.8)      *(0.6)•(0.5)+(0.2)•
  sal   •gz win•gazes at her task-----•gz CUS-----•
  sal → *.....*stretches plastic*puts cheese on plastic->
  cus                                       +opens door-----+walks in->
  cus                                       ±looks bk at her shopping trolley->
  fig           #fig.8.1a/b
```



8.1a=8.1b

```
2      •(0.5)#*
  sal   •gz task->
  sal   ->*
  fig           #fig.8.2
3  CUS   *grüetzi#[:: ±
         hello
4  SAL   [grützi:
         hello
  sal → *wraps in plastic->
  cus   ->±gz at SAL±
  fig           #fig.8.3
```

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8.2



8.3



8.4

5 (0.9)•(0.7) • (1.1) •±(0.4) \*(0.4)•#(0.2)±(0.2)•  
 sal → ->\*finishes pack on counter\*cont pack above cntr->  
 sal •gz CUS•gz task•gz CUS-----•gz task-----•  
 cus ±gz SAL-----±gz cheese->  
 fig #fig.8.4

6 •(0.3)•  
 sal •gz CUS•

7 SAL •was hätte #s•ie+ gärn?  
*what would you like*  
 sal •gz task-----•gz CUS->  
 cus ->+stops facing SAL->  
 fig #fig.8.5



8.5

8 (0.4)±(0.3)•(0.6)  
 cus ->±gazes in front->  
 sal ->•gz task->

9 CUS ehm (0.1)•(0.2) gärn e †vieux† #gruy†•ère,#  
*please an old gruyère*  
 ehm  
 sal ->•gz CUS-----•gz task->  
 cus †points†,,,,,†  
 fig #fig.8.6 #fig.8.7



8.6



8.7

10 (0.3)•(0.2)±(0.7)# \* (1.1)# \* (1.1) \*  
 sal → ->\*puts cheese aside\*arranges bag\*pushes ch aside\*  
 cus -->±gazes away->  
 fig #fig.8.8 #fig.8.9

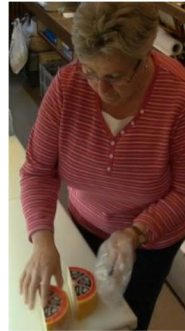
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8.8



8.9



8.10

```

11      *(0.6)#• (0.7) *(0.3)*(0.2)±(1.5)#      *
sal →  *puts bag on top*....,*LH grasps gruyère*
sal      ->•looks at gruyere-->>
cus
cus      -->±gazes in front-->>
fig      #fig.8.10                               #fig.8.11
    
```



8.11

The salesperson looks through the window (1.1) and sees the customer approaching the door. Nonetheless, she begins to stretch a plastic sheet, preparing to pack some cheese (Fig.8.1). As the customer enters, the salesperson finishes stretching the sheet and puts the cheese on it, alternating her gaze between her ongoing task and the approaching customer. As soon as the customer walks in, they exchange partially overlapping greetings (1.3–4) – this time the customer speaks first and also lengthens the greeting. The salesperson still looks at the task (Fig.8.2), wrapping the cheese in plastic on the counter (Fig.8.3), then above the counter (Fig.8.4), turning the piece various times. The customer also alternates her gaze between the salesperson and the products (1.5). The salesperson invites the customer to make a request (1.7), converging with the arrival of the customer in front of her – thereby displaying an orientation to the relevance of engaging in service at that point (Fig.8.5). As the customer makes a request (1.9), the salesperson is still wrapping the cheese: she looks at the customer’s pointing gesture (Fig.8.6), but returns her gaze to her task (Fig.8.7). Before

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complying with the request, she takes time not only to put the cheese aside (Fig.8.8) but also to arrange the plastic bag on top of it (Fig.8.9), before moving everything on the edge of the counter (Fig.8.10). Only then does she finally pick up the requested Gruyère (Fig.8.11).

In this case, the salesperson takes time to pursue her ongoing task. There are several occasions to suspend the task, but she extends it, putting the plastic around the cheese, manipulating it, and finally putting everything aside. Meanwhile, the customer takes the time to inspect the products, while still monitoring the packing process. The customer's gaze shift from the salesperson to the products and, correspondingly, the salesperson's gaze shift from the customer to the ongoing, competing task, is not simply a matter of disengagement from the interlocutor (Heath, 1981; Robinson, 1998, p. 106). Their gazes are directed at something that is relevant for the progression of the encounter, to deciding what to buy or to pursuing tasks related to the maintenance of the shop. The shifting gazes thus reflect the participants' ongoing adjustment between beginning the service and allowing time for other institutionally accountable activities. Furthermore, the salesperson's invitation to order (l.7) both orients to her being late and displays her availability to progress (verbally) in the encounter, managing persistent multiactivity. Although the granting of the request is further delayed, the customer aligns with it, e.g., by delaying her own turn (l.9).

In sum, the excerpts analyzed in this section have shown how the participants adjust the progressivity of the encounter, allowing for the salesperson to continue her ongoing task. The customer does this by slowing down the approach to and establishment of the "service point" and the request; the salesperson either finishes the task, suspends it, or continues it while orienting to the service by verbally inviting a request. Consequently, the ongoing task is jointly built as legitimate, belonging to the work of the salesperson, and giving her the right to prolong it. The participants jointly achieve a balance between service and other tasks, and recognize them as belonging to the "work" of the salesperson.



### Divergent Orientations within the Emerging Openings: Double Greetings

In all the previous cases, the embodied and verbal establishment of contact through mutual eye gaze, approaching one another, and greetings unfold sequentially into presenting the request, although this sequential progression involves extensions and delays due to accommodating the seller's relative unavailability or the customer's decision-making. Yet in some cases, the participants diverge in their appraisal of the temporality of the openings and the delay of the request. In these deviant cases, another sequence of greetings re-establishes the opening of the encounter. We demonstrate this with two extracts.

In the first one, recorded in the Espoo bakery, the salesperson is filling in the products in a display cabinet in the shop window.

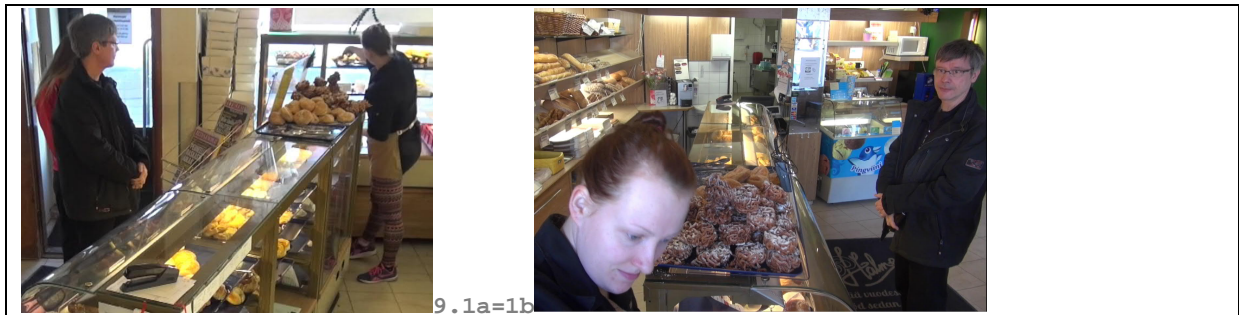
(9) (BAK\_FIN\_ESP\_210415\_3.28.59\_CLI109) (Finnish)

```

1      (4.5)+(0.9)  +(0.3)°
  sal  >>gz at task->
  sal  °opens cabinet->
  cus  +steps in+walks twd counter->
2      (1.4)±(0.1)°(0.2)†(0.9)±
  cus  ±gz at SAL-----±at products->
  cus  †takes out wallet->
  sal  ->°moves 1st item to shelf->
3      (0.3)+•(0.4)•(0.5)† •(0.1)
  cus  ->+standing by counter-->>
  cus  ->†
  sal  ->•,,,,,•gz at CUS•...->
4  SAL  he•i hei::.
      hello hello
  sal  ->•gz at task->
5      (0.4)±(0.5)°# ±
  sal  ->°moves 2nd item->
  cus  ->±gz at SAL±at products->
  fig  #fig.9.1a/1b

```

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```

6 CUS      °hei°‡
           hi
cus        ‡lips pressed together->
7          (2.5)‡±°(0.3)  ±(0.2)•(0.8)  •(0.2)±
cus        ->‡
cus        ->‡gz at SAL‡at other CUS-----‡products->
sal        ->°finishing task at window->
sal        ->°gz at CUS*task->
8          (2.0)‡±(0.5)°(0.2)*±
cus        ->‡gz at SAL----‡gz away->
cus        ‡lips pressed together->
sal        ->°takes tray->
sal        *turns twd worktop->
9          (0.7)±•(0.2)ø(0.3)‡
cus        ->‡gz SAL->
cus        ->‡
sal        ->°gz CUS->
sal        øsmiles->

```

```

10 CUS     .mt °heii°ø=
           hi
cus        ->‡gz at products->
sal        ->ø
11 SAL     =>m•oi<.=
           hi
sal        ->°gz at task->

```

```

12 CUS →  =†mä otan nel†jä† •hillo°munkkia. °
           I take four jam doughnuts
cus        †points-----†
cus        ->‡gz at SAL-->>
sal        ->°gz at CUS-->>
sal        ->°stops hand°tray down-->>

```

When the salesperson gazes at the customer for the first time (1.3), he has already entered, seen the salesperson busy with her task, and taken out his wallet. The salesperson greets him, but continues moving the products from a tray to the showcase (1.4). The customer is panning other products and does not look at the salesperson during her greeting. He orients to the greeting only when the salesperson has already turned back to the products (1.5). In a quick movement, he turns to gaze at the salesperson (who is no longer looking at him), and then, after a pause (Fig.9.1a/1b), he produces a quiet greeting that is readable from

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his lips but barely audible. He then stands still, with his lips pressed together, gazing around and waiting for the salesperson (1.6–9).

The salesperson finishes moving the items from the tray and turns around to put it away (1.8). While doing this, she gazes at the customer (1.9), who is looking at her (still holding his lips pressed together), and she smiles at him. At this point, the customer produces a new silent greeting, to which the salesperson responds verbally, even though she is still occupied with the task of putting away the tray (1.11). Immediately after, the customer utters a request. The salesperson is about to place the tray on the worktop, but freezes her movement (1.12) until the customer has produced the name of the product. Only then does she finally complete the competing activity, and begins to fetch the product.

In this extract, the first greeting sequence does not open a mutual engagement to an upcoming request: the salesperson returns to her task, and the customer's late greeting shows that for him the encounter has not yet reached a mutually recognizable point where service can begin. Instead, the salesperson is unavailable, fully occupied with another task. On the one hand, the customer displays non-intrusiveness in the salesperson's task by looking at products. On the other hand, by returning to gaze at the salesperson on several occasions he displays readiness to proceed in the encounter. His long-held facial expression with lips pressed together can also be taken as manifesting some inconvenience. In other words, the participants display divergent orientations toward the emerging, delayed opening.

The case demonstrates the significance of mutual gaze in openings (Heath, 1981; Mondada, 2009; Clark & Pinch, 2010) and, more generally, the participants' normative orientation to the mutual recognition of each other's availability. The first mutual gaze between salesperson and customer occurs only at line 9, accompanied by the salesperson's smile. The customer treats this as a display of the salesperson becoming available for service, as he almost immediately launches his request. However, by greeting again before

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proceeding to the request, he also treats the prior instance of greetings as unsuccessful in terms of projecting the beginning of service. With the second greeting sequence, the participants achieve the opening anew.

A second occurrence of double greetings takes place in a cheese shop in Barcelona.

The customer entering the shop sees that the salesperson is busy:

```
(10) (FRO_CAT_BCN_070116/CLI13/1.14.00) (Catalan)
1  (1.2) ±(0.4)°•(0.2)•(0.3)±(0.2)
   cus >>walks in the shop and along counter--->li 7
   cus >>looks prod±looks at SAL-----±takes glasses off->
   sal >>stays busy at edge of the counter----->li 10
   sal °brings packg on cntr->
   sal •.....•looks at CUS->
2  CUS  hol•[a
   hi
3  SAL  [hola, bo°n± dia °m°
   hi    good morning m
   sal  ->•looks at her task->
   sal  ->°opens plastic bag->
   cus  ->±looks at SAL->
4  (0.4)•(0.6)
   sal  ->•looks CUS and smiles->
5  CUS  hola•±°
   hi
   sal  ->•looks at task->
   sal  ->°puts something in the plastic bag->
   cus  ->±looks at products->
6  SAL → hola, [digui'm
   hi    tell me
7  CUS → [a vera volia un formatge• que sigui tendre•+
   I would like a cheese that would be smooth
   sal  -->•looks at CUS-----•at task->
   cus  ->+stops->
8  (0.5)±(0.2)
   cus  ->±looks at SAL->
9  SAL  >sí<±
   yes
   cus  ->±looks at products-->>
10 (1.0) ° (0.4) °•*(0.7)+
   sal  ->°deposits bag on ctr°
   sal  ->•looks at CUS->
   sal  ->•walks twd product->
   cus  ->+walks twd product->
11 SAL  ti•pu:: aix°i*ns:?
   style like this
   sal  ->•looks at product->
   sal  °leans dwn in the fridge->
   sal  ->*
```

The customer walks into the shop as the salesperson is busy packing products at the opposite side of the counter. The co-participants greet quite early (1.2–3) in partial overlap, but do not look at each other: just before the greetings the salesperson gazes at the customer,

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and the latter gazes at the former towards sequence completion. They establish mutual gaze later on (1.4) and this occasions a smile from the salesperson (1.4), still busy with her packing. The smile can be a way of paying attention to the customer, although not yet attending her. But the customer orients to it as an occasion to proceed in the encounter (1.5). Similar to the prior extract, another pair of greetings occurs while the salesperson is still busy with a competing task.

In their subsequent action, both participants orient to the second greeting sequence as prompting the beginning of service. The salesperson invites the customer to utter her request (1.6) at the same time as the customer utters it (1.7). “Digui’m”/“Tell me” works in similar ways as “was hätte sie garn?”/“what would you like?” (extract 8, 1.7) – it allows the salesperson to progress in the encounter verbally although not yet being fully available. As the customer turns to the products, the salesperson finishes her task, deposits the package on the counter and moves along the counter, toward the product she finally proposes (1.11).

In this case, the salesperson does not suspend her task but expands it instead. At the same time, she displays her orientation to the customer, smiling, and responding to her, using – in a situation of multiactivity – verbal turns to project and at the same time manage the delay caused by her embodied actions.

In brief, whereas in the earlier sections the participants managed to postpone the beginning of service to allow a slight overlap with competing activities before the salesperson suspended or finished them, here the customers end up “restarting” the encounter with a second greeting sequence. In both cases examined (Ex.9–10), the initial greeting sequence has occurred with unilateral gazes; the late mutual gaze and the salesperson’s smile occasion a second greeting sequence, immediately followed by a request. The participants do not manage the delayed entry into the encounter at the same pace: the customer waits for service,

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monitors the seller's competing activity as making her temporarily unavailable, and finally, prompts her availability by re-issuing greetings.

Instances of double greetings have been observed in the literature, all referring to contingencies that occasion a re-doing of the openings: in video-mediated communications, double greetings are occasioned by the transition from an audio-only connection to a visual contact, the late establishment of mutual image systematically generating new greetings (Fornel 1994, p. 118; Mondada, 2015, p. 61–62). First greetings are used for technical checks, followed by second greetings when the technology actually works (Mondada, 2015, p. 64; Relieu, 2007, p. 208). In multilingual interactions, double greetings are used to renegotiate the language of the encounter, and to restart it in a new language (Mondada, 2017). In face-to-face interactions, double greetings manage the distance of the participants and their mutual approach (Kendon & Ferber, 1973; in particular Varcasia, 2010, p. 664 observes double greetings in service encounters, the first when entering and the second when approaching the counter). All these configurations show that double greetings “restart” the interaction for diverse practical purposes – in our case, by prompting the salesperson to progress into the next phase of the encounter.

### **Conclusion**

Studying how customers and salespersons engage in encounters from their very first steps in the shop, this paper has explored issues in both the multimodal organization of openings and the organization of institutional openings.

Openings have only recently been analyzed in a multimodal way: In face-to-face encounters, the consideration of both linguistic and embodied features makes it possible to

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fully appreciate what it literally means to jointly and coordinately “enter” into interaction. In shop encounters, this is implemented in an asymmetrical, yet reciprocal manner by the participants – the salesperson watching and monitoring the arrival of the customer, the customer entering the shop and gazing at the products as well as at the salesperson, and the salesperson walking along the counter, both progressing and converging until they reach what we called the “service point.” The “service point” is neither a location that is predefined prior to the exchange, nor an evident and taken-for-granted moment projected by the initiation of the opening: rather, we show that the service point is at the same time a temporal moment at which participants are reaching a reciprocal position, a space along the counter, an embodied arrangement in which the participants stop and face each other, and a sequential slot where the opening is completed and the first request is projected. The paper demonstrates what happens before the service point is reached and how that conditions its establishment; how it is methodically defined and achieved by the participants, and which contingencies might affect both the timing of its achievement and the specific embodied spatial configuration in which it is achieved.

The focus on the “service point” is also a way to tackle the institutionality of the exchange. As the moment at which the salesperson is ready to serve the customer, it condenses the reciprocal rights and obligations of the customer and the salesperson. In smooth openings, this position is reached in perfect sync, without any hitches. In other cases, reaching the service point can be delayed by different practices (by the customer slowing down his/her walk and inspecting the products, by the salesperson displaying he/she is busy and looking at his/her task). These might end in the participants reaching the service point at the same time, but might also generate temporal and organizational mismatches, in which the customer waits for a service that the salesperson subordinates to other tasks. The paper

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describes the systematic practices through which the participants manage these different constellations.

Among the contingencies affecting the openings, the *availability* of the salesperson and the way it is seen by the customer is a crucial element. Being available is a publicly visible display by the salesperson that is seen and monitored by the customer entering the shop. The accountability of the display and the way in which (un)availability is sustained embody the different rights and obligations of the salesperson. In displaying availability, s/he favors an immediate readiness for service, responding to the obligations toward the customer; in displaying unavailability, s/he claims the right to be engaged in other tasks that are part of his/her work, but not of service. The accountable status of being (un)available is locally negotiated with the customer, who might treat it as legitimate or not, and who might align with it or try to accelerate the progressivity of the encounter. Reflexively, the salesperson adjusts with the perspective displayed by the customer.

Walking, gesturing, gazing, orienting to the Other versus to products and tasks, are embodied practices that characterize the temporal multimodal organization of the openings and the negotiation of the (un)availability of the salesperson. For example, the customer might delay (or not) the establishment of the service point by slowing down the walk and inspecting the products, but s/he can also insist on being served by approaching the counter and looking at the salesperson.

Establishing mutual gaze is crucial for mutual recognition and contact in the opening, but gaze is also relevant in later orientations to the participants' rights and responsibilities. By turning to gaze at the products, the customer can make accountable a delay produced by herself or by the seller's unavailability, as the gaze targets something relevant for the choosing/buying activity. In this way, the customer can adjust to the salesperson's activities in a non-intrusive way instead of bluntly waiting for service (cf. Ex.9). The salesperson can,



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for her part, display being occupied with another (work) task by engaging with relevant material objects. By returning their gaze to the interlocutor (and e.g., by smiling), both parties can again display readiness to proceed to the next activities.

Participants coordinate their entry into the encounter and orientation to (un)availability also through the timing of greetings. Early timed, simultaneous greetings in smooth entries are produced as soon as the participants sight each other and exchange mutual glances (ex.1–2), whereas later, non-overlapping greetings (or ones that achieve partial simultaneity through extensive lengthening) are related to waiting for and securing the salesperson's availability (Ex.5–7). In this sense, greetings can manage different tasks, depending on their timing. This is further demonstrated by the participants engaging in second greetings. In these cases, the first, early greetings have been achieved within limited reciprocity, in the absence of the salesperson's availability and mutual gaze (Ex.9–10).

The dialectics between availability and unavailability for service shows how the balance between “service” and “other work” is achieved and oriented to by the participants. Displays of unavailability make “work” observable by and for the co-present parties. Adjustments and resistance show how it is responded to, and treated as legitimate or not. Prioritizing “work” over “service” can generate convergent or divergent claims of adjusting or conflicting rights and obligations. Their accountability is reflexively defined within a local negotiation of the legitimacy of what the salesperson is doing and how much it can be extended, as well as of the rights of the customer to be served. This shows how the multimodal methodic practices achieving openings are constitutive for the establishment of mutual relationships and the participants' rights and obligations within adjusting versus conflicting perspectives.

### Transcription Conventions

Talk is transcribed following Gail Jefferson's conventions. Embodied actions are transcribed according to the conventions for multimodal transcription developed by Lorenza Mondada:

([https://franzoestik.philhist.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/franzoestik/mondada\\_multimodal\\_conventions.pdf](https://franzoestik.philhist.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/franzoestik/mondada_multimodal_conventions.pdf))

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