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Laury, Ritva

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Definitely Indefinite: Negotiating Intersubjective Common Ground in Everyday Interaction in Finnish

Ritva Laury, University of Helsinki

Abstract

This chapter concerns expressions which seem internally contradictory because they consist of both a recognitional and a non-recognitional element. They contain both the Finnish demonstrative *se* ‘that, the’, a recognitional, as in *se ihminen* ‘that/the person’, and one of the indefinite determiners *yksi* ‘one’, *semmonen* ‘such’ and *joku* ‘some’, all of which are non-recognitionals, resulting in expressions such as *se joku ihminen* ‘that/the some person’. The chapter shows that each of these expressions has its own home environment and expresses a distinct epistemic stance. The main findings are that these expressions constitute a fine-grained resource for the negotiation of relative epistemic status and are tools for building intersubjective common ground in interaction.

Keywords: definite, indefinite, recognitional, specific, identifiable, determiner, epistemic

1 Introduction

Among the most obvious and transparent grammatical markers of intersubjectivity and epistemic stance are noun phrase determiners which express definiteness or indefiniteness. For example, the main function of definite articles such as the English *the* is to index identifiability of the referent, while indefinite articles, such as *a/an*, or indefinite determiners such as *some* index the opposite (see, e.g., Du Bois 1980). By using an expression such as *the woman*, a speaker implies that her addressee can identify what woman is being referred to, that is, that the woman in question belongs in the common ground shared by the speaker and the addressee, while the expressions *a woman* and *some woman* imply that the referent is not shared, and that the addressee is not meant to know which particular woman is being referred to, if the NP is even used referentially. In other words, expressions such as *the woman* is a recognitional form, while *a woman* and *some woman* are non-recognitional. However, as shown by Du Bois, the marking of identifiability is facultative (1980: 219). Referents are marked as identifiable only “close enough to satisfy the curiosity of the hearer” (Du Bois 1980: 233). This means that speakers may use

nonrecognitional forms for referents which are perfectly identifiable to the recipient, and the reverse – recognitionals can be used even when the referent is not strictly identifiable.

Finnish is said to have no articles, either definite or indefinite.

However, it has been observed that in spoken Finnish, the demonstrative *se* functions as a marker of identifiability in a way very similar to the English definite article *the*; it is used to imply that the addressee can identify the referent (Laury 1995, 1996, 1997; Etelämäki 2005, 2006). On the other hand, the markers *yks(i)* ‘one’, *joku* ‘some’, and *semmonen* ‘such’ are said to have functions similar to indefinite articles such as the English *a/an* (Vilkuna 1992, Erringer 1996, Juvonen 2005).¹ In earlier research, it has been suggested that all three imply that the addressee cannot uniquely identify the referent. In addition, *yksi* ‘one’ is thought to be used with referents specific to the speaker, but not to the addressee (Vilkuna 1992: 80); by using *yksi*, the speaker expresses that s/he has some particular referent in mind, but that the exact identity of the referent may not be known by the recipient or even important in the context (Hakulinen et al. 2004: §1410). In that way, *yksi* is similar to the unstressed *this*, which is known to be used in English as a determiner on NPs whose referent is specific but not marked as identifiable to the addressee (e.g., Du Bois 1980: 224). On the other hand, *joku* ‘some’ is used for referents that are not specific to either

¹ The numeral *yksi* occurs in the form *yks* in my data.

the speaker or the addressee (Vilkuna 1992: 80, 132); but see Juvonen 2005: 207). In contrast, *semmonen* ‘such’ is used when the addressee is expected to be able to identify the type or class rather than the specific referent (Vilkuna 1992: 132–133; Erringer 1996; Juvonen 2005: 199, 207).

In this article, I will focus on the use of both the marker of definiteness, *se* ‘it, that, the’, and one of the markers of indefiniteness together, in rather fixed combinations constituting expressions such as *se yks mies* ‘that one man’, *se joku mies* ‘that some man’, and *se semmonen mies* ‘that such man’.² My main research questions have to do with the conditions under which the use of both markers on the same NP occurs, and what happens in the interaction when such seemingly internally conflicting claims of sharedness are made.

I will suggest that the Finnish markers of definiteness and indefiniteness are a fine-grained resource for the management of epistemic stance and the negotiation of relative epistemic status. I use these terms in the sense described by Heritage (2012a, b). By epistemic status Heritage means the relative access, including rights to know, based on, among other factors, knowledge and experience with a particular domain. Epistemic stance, on the other hand, refers to the positioning of speakers as relatively knowing or unknowing through the design of turns-at-talk (e.g., Heritage 2012a: 32–33; 2012b: 376). In his account of these concepts, Heritage

² The translations I provide do not have the same implications as the Finnish expressions, and the last two may not even be possible in English.

focuses mainly on the syntactic structure of utterances and especially sequential factors, but my claim here is that the design of noun phrases is a foundational practice in the expression of epistemic stance. Rather than being used simply to reflect the speaker's assumptions about the cognitive status of particular referents in the addressee's mind, the different forms emerge as a result of and in response to what is going on in the interaction, who the recipient of the particular form is, and what its sequential position is. Participants use them to express their epistemic stance and thereby to negotiate and resolve their respective epistemic access to referents. In this way, referential forms are tools in the process of building intersubjective common ground in interaction.

The article is organized according to the formats seen in my data. I first discuss the most commonly used combination of a definite and indefinite determiner in my data, *se yksi*. Then I will discuss uses of *se semmonen* and last, *se joku*.

2 Background on Referring and the Use of Referential Forms in Interaction

There is a very large literature on reference, definiteness and indefiniteness in linguistics. The first modern discussions of reference date back to turn of the century philosophers, who asked questions about the relationship

between a referential form and the existence of the referent, and the distinction between sense and reference (Frege 1892; Russell 1905). Modern linguistic discussions, on the other hand, have focused on the way that the choice of referential form relates to the presumed cognitive status of the referent in the mind of the addressee (see, e.g., Chafe 1994; Ariel 1990; Prince 1981; for a concise description of these approaches, see, e.g., Laury 2009).

Another important strand of research within linguistics has concerned the way that the form of a mention is related to its context. This tradition dates back to Jespersen's (1922) notion of shifters, linguistic elements such as personal pronouns, whose meaning shifts depending on the context. The notion was further developed by Jakobson (1990[1971]), who proposed that the use of shifters involved conventional rules concerning the relationship between the signs and their referents in a particular situation, in other words, that they were indexes (Peirce 1955[1940]). Silverstein (1976) developed the notion of indexicality further. For our purposes here, his most important insight was that because of their conventionalized meanings, indexes have the power of bringing into being contextual features which need not be present prior to the utterance. In that sense, indexical elements of language build their own context.

Most of the linguistic research discussed so far has been on English. The work of Hanks on Mayan deixis (1990; 1992) is a notable exception, stressing the sociocentricity of indexicals. The work of Hanks has been

applied to Finnish especially by Etelämäki (2005; 2006; see also Laury 1997). Etelämäki notes that among linguistic approaches to reference, Hanks' work is especially compatible with the way that reference has been understood in Conversation Analysis (2005: 35), although Hanks is not a conversation analyst, but rather an anthropological linguist.

In Conversation Analysis, and more recently in Interactional Linguistics, reference has been seen as designed for its recipient (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1996; Enfield & Stivers 2007), and as emergent from its sequential context and constructed jointly by the participants in conversation (e.g., Goodwin 1979; Ford & Fox 1996; Heritage 2007). Further, reference is seen as contributing to the forming of actions in interaction (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Stivers 2007; Pekarek Doehler, De Stefani & Horlacher 2015). Two principles in particular have been identified as crucial to the selection of forms of reference, especially in reference to persons but also places, namely the preference for recognitionals, forms that allow the recipient to identify the referent, and the preference for minimal forms (Sacks and Schegloff 1979; Hachohen & Schegloff 2006). However, these principles do not cover all forms used even in reference to persons; for example, Stivers (2007) shows that what she calls "alternative" forms do not easily fit these two preferences. This is also the case with the forms discussed here.

Recipient design and the preference for recognitionals might be seen as extensions of the idea of identifiability and accessibility marking, but

they encompass much more. As Goodwin (1979; 1981) and Ford and Fox (1996) have shown, in multiparty conversations the speaker monitors closely which one of the participants in conversation chooses to attend to him or her and may modify an utterance in progress accordingly. In that way, the issue of reciprocity becomes the responsibility of not just the speaker but also the addressee; the speaker may select a recipient, but at the same time, recipients are able to choose whether they attend to a particular utterance or not, and display their availability as recipients; reciprocity is dynamic and affected by factors such as gaze and posture, and for that reason, the idea of *you* simply picking out the recipient requires further examination (Lerner 1996; Schegloff 1996).

3 Data and Methodology

The data used in this study come from *Arkisyn*, a morphosyntactically coded database of Finnish everyday conversation compiled at the University of Turku with data from the University of Helsinki Conversation Analysis Archives and the University of Turku Recording Archive. In approximately 30 hours of conversation, there were altogether 35 uses of the target constructions, 22 uses of *se yks(i)*, 9 uses of *se semmonen*, and 4 uses of *se joku* as noun phrase determiners. Thus these uses of the definite determiner *se* with an indefinite determiner are not especially common in Finnish

conversation, occurring on the average only slightly more than once an hour. However, they are worth studying because they form an exception to both the preference for recognitionals and the preference for minimal forms, since the use of indefinite determiners together with definite determiners does not contribute to the recognizability of the referent, but rather expresses that there is some type of problem with identifiability, and it also makes the NP longer and more complex. I will discuss these forms in their order of frequency in the data. In examining these forms in their contexts, I use the methodology of interactional linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018).

4 Definite Indefinites in Finnish Conversation

In what follows, I will show that the forms that are in focus here each have their own home environments in which they emerge, which they shape, and in which they do particular types of reference. The most frequently used format, *se yks(i)* ‘that one’ typically occurs in tellings and informings and presents referents that the speaker claims primary epistemic access to. The referent may have been mentioned in prior talk (hence *se*), but the exact identity (that is, its specificity) may be either irrelevant to the addressee or at least may require further explication (hence *yksi*) (cf., Hakulinen et al.

2004: §1417).³ *Se semmonen* ‘that kind of’ is used in contexts where the category of the referent is being negotiated, often at length; the exact category may be unknown even to the speaker (cf., Hakulinen et al. 2004: §1417). *Se joku* ‘that some’ is used in mentions of referents which are in some way unimportant; they are not rementioned, and the implication is that although both the speaker and the recipient have epistemic access to the referent, neither one knows or is interested in the referent’s exact identity.

4.1 *Se yks* in Negotiations of Epistemic Access

As noted, *se yks* is the most frequently used of the three expressions. It typically occurs in tellings and informings of various sorts, and it is often used for person reference. More than half (13/22) of the uses of this expression involve mentions of people. This is the case in Excerpt 1 below. It comes from a telephone conversation between two young women, Vikke and Missu. In line 1, Vikke announces that she has had a dream about school, and Missu invites her to tell about it (line 2).

Excerpt 1: (Sg 112 1a3 Sualapala), telephone call

01 VIK: mä näin unta koulustaki?,

³ For the concept of specificity, see Section 1 above. As noted there, specificity is distinct from identifiability and has to do with whether the form refers to a particular entity or person or not (see Vilkuna 1992: 77–105; Du Bois 1980: 208, 217–220; 224).

I even dreamt about school,

- 02 MIS: **mitä sää nä[it.**
what did you dream about.
- 03 VIK: **[(ku) alko,.hhh (.) no siel ol-i, (.)**
when it started there was,
- 04 **khm (0.3) .mt mun ↑serkkuni <Salla>**
my cousin Salla,
- 05 MIS: **nii.**
ok.
- 06 VIK: **Rantalan Anni,**
Anni Rantala,
- 07 MIS: **fjoo-of?,**
yeah,

(.)
- 08 VIK:=> **ja sit se yks poika: Lahde-sta.(.)mikä on(0.6)**
and then DEM one boy PN-ELA REL be-3SG
and then that one boy from Lahti. who is,
- 09 **ol-i<,v- vaihto-oppilaa-na.h (0.3)just vuaden?,**
be-PST exchange-student-ESS just year-ACC
was just an exchange student for a year,
- 10 **=se, Mäkelä-n Kimmo-n kaveri**
DEM LN-GEN FN-GEN friend
that friend of Kimmo Mäkelä's
- 11 **(0.3)**
- 12 MIS: **KUka, h**
who
- 13 VIK: → **se mikä on se-n, (0.3) se-n,**
DEM REL be-3SG DEM-GEN DEM-GEN
the one who is that, that,
- 14 → **se-n poliisi-m [poika.**
DEM-GEN police-GEN son
that police officer's son.
- 15 MIS: **[.hh se Vehviläine,**
DEM LN
that Vehviläinen,
- 16 VIK: **>nii<.**
right.
- 17 MIS: **joo [:: f>mull]et tuliki se mieleen< niinku etf**

ok, it did occur to me that like

- 18 VIK: [**se oli,**]
 he was
- 19 MIS: .**hh [ai se (ol)/(>o'ollu<) vaihto-oppilaana.h**
 PTC DEM be be be-PST exchange-student-ESS
 oh he has been an exchange student.
- 20 VIK: [(-)]
- 21 MIS: .**hhhhhh nii, hh**
 .*hhhhhh yeah, hh*
- 22 VIK: **se oli (h) s (h) i (h) älä (h)**
 he was there
- 23 MIS: **ehhh he .hhhh**
- 24 VIK: **ne kolme,**
 those three.

Vikke starts her telling by mentioning the people she dreamed about in a list of three. The first mention (line 4) is formatted in a way that associates the referent with the speaker, a common or even the preferred way to refer to persons in a number of languages (see, e.g., Brown 2007 on Tzeltal; Hanks 2007 on Yucatec Maya). The mention of the next person in the list (line 6) involves the use of a name, another common form in references to people. In Finnish, this particular format, with the last name first in genitive form, implies familiarity of the person to the participants. Missu appears to recognize the first two without any problem by using the particles *niin* and *joo* (Sorjonen 2001), which in this context show both that the reference has been resolved and that the action undertaken by Vikke is not finished.

In line 8, Vikke mentions the last item in her list of three, *se yks poika Lahdesta* ‘that one guy from Lahti’. This is not a minimal form of reference,

but rather one of the alternative forms for referring to persons discussed by Stivers (2007) in that it contains a demonstrative. Stivers, based on her mostly English data, suggests that mentions of people marked with demonstrative determiners “do not associate the referent with either the speaker or the addressee” (2007: 85). However, in the Finnish three-member set of demonstratives, the demonstrative *se*, as noted, implies that the referent is identifiable to the addressee, that is, that s/he can recognize who is being referred to (Laury 1997; Etelämäki 2006), and in that sense, it associates the referent with the addressee, placing the referent in her epistemic domain (Laury 1997). However, *yksi*, as suggested by Vilkuna (1992: 80), marks the referent as speaker-specific, that is, it conveys that the exact identity of the referent is known only by the speaker. This is very clear in this excerpt. Although Missu had immediately shown that she recognized the first two referents, in contrast, after the mention in line 8 there is a short pause, after which Vikke adds a relative clause designed to give more information about the person she is referring to (lines 8–9). Vikke then associates him with what appears to be a common acquaintance, judging from the format (line 10); this last form is also marked with *se*, encoding the assumption that the friend of Kimmo Mäkelä is someone recognizable to Missu. These additions can both be heard as attempts to help Missu recognize the referent, as both are marked with *se*, indicating recognizability. These attempts do not succeed, however. After a pause, Missu issues a prosodically marked token of the repair initiator *kuka* ‘who’

(line 12). It is produced at a higher volume and pitch than the surrounding talk, as a clear appeal.

At this point, Vikke refers to the person in question with an anaphoric use of the demonstrative *se* followed by a relative clause (lines 13–14) associating the person with the occupational status of his father, also marked as identifiable (*sen poliisin* ‘that police officer’s’). This way of formulating the reference succeeds, and in overlap with the last word of Vikke’s turn, Missu provides the last name of the person (line 15). This mention is now marked as identifiable with *se*. The identity of the person and the match of the referential form with the person Vikke has been referring to is confirmed by her in line 16. The negotiation, consisting of several steps, has succeeded and intersubjective common ground has been collaboratively established.

The initial mention in line 8, differently from the two which were immediately recognized and acknowledged by Missu, is marked with both *se* for identifiability and with *yks* to index the referent as specific for Vikke, but not for Missu. That is, the form used may be taken as an indication that Vikke is already in some sense anticipating difficulty with the recognizability of the referent, and indeed, a negotiation ensues. By using *yks*, Vikke expresses that she is referring to someone whose exact identity is accessible to her but not to Missu. In other words, she takes the stance that she has primary epistemic access to the referent. At the same time, she expects Missu to be able to identify the referent as well; this is conveyed

through the use of *se*. Although this mention fails, recognition is achieved after negotiation, and intersubjectivity is restored.

In lines 19–22, the participants go back to revisiting the information given in the relative clause following the initial mention of the person whose identity is at issue here, and Missu expresses, using the particle *ai*, that the fact that he had been an exchange student is news to her (Hakulinen et al. 2004: §798). This shows that referential recognizability and negotiation is consequential for participants, and that they may be accountable for not being able to recognize referents so marked in conversation.

When we take into account the fact that the mention formatted with *se yks* in Excerpt 1 comes within a narrative, like many other uses of this format in the data, it may be understandable that since a narrative tells about occurrences presumably known by the speaker and not the addressee, that is, they are A-events (Labov & Fanshel 1977), referents may be marked as being primarily in the speaker's epistemic domain, even if they may be at the same time assumed to be identifiable to the addressee as well. However, not all determiner uses of *se yksi* are in narratives. They may also occur in informings, and there is one use of *se yksi* in my data occurring in neither a telling nor an informing. In this case, it presents a referent that appears to be specific not just to the speaker but also for the other participants. It is given here in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2: (SG151), face-to-face informal interaction

- 01 SUS: **siis onks se nyt onks se Tupu nyt**
PTC be-Q-CLI DEM now be-Q-CLI DEM FN now
so has she now has Tupu now
- 02 **saa-nu selvite-tty-y**
get-PPT find.out-PPPC-PAR
managed to figure out
- 03 => **se-n, (0.4)yhe ihmise-n raskausftila-a(h)**
DEM-GEN one-GEN person-GEN pregnancy-state-PAR
that one person's pregnancy status
- 04 **v(h)ai e(h)if.**
or NEG
or not.
- 05 **(0.6)**
- 06 ANU: **.hh[h °e-m-mie tiiä°,]**
NEG-1SG-1SG know-CONNEG
I don't know.
- 07 JOS: **[°kato°, (.) eiks se] ollu, (.) >myö_o ainaki**
you see wasn't it, we at least have
- 08 **mitä mie viimeks< kuuli siit Satu ei ainakaa**
the last I heard about that Satu didn't at least
- 09 **lainannu niitä,**
lend/borrow that,
- 10 **(0.2)**
- 11 ANU: **↑ni[i niit vaunuja.]**
yeah that stroller
- 12 SUS: **[nii niit vaunuja,] (.) joo,=**
yeah that stroller yeah,
- 13 ANU: **=mm.**
- 14 **(0.4)**

This example comes from a conversation among three young women. In

lines 1–3, Susa initiates a new sequence and a new activity amounting to an

invitation to gossip about a mutual acquaintance.⁴ Apparently the participants have been wondering whether this acquaintance is pregnant. The issue is somewhat delicate, and it seems likely that Susa chooses the referential form because the conversation is being recorded. The other participants seem to have no problem recognizing who the form *sen yhen ihmisen* ‘that one person’s’ refers to. Thus, one possible way to interpret this is that the referent is identifiable and specific to the participants, but not to outsiders who will be listening to the recording later. This is an ‘in the know’ type referential form discussed by Stivers (2007: 89–94), which requires more extensive common ground than most other types of referential forms. Here, we may assume that the form both reinforces the closeness of the friends, especially given the grammatical format which could potentially refer to any person. In Stivers’ (2007) data the use of “in the know” references to persons were typically found in complaint sequences. Although the sequence shown here is not a complaint, it does develop into a distinctly disapproving commentary on the person referred to in line 3. There is a further person reference formatted as a first name, *Satu*, in line 8, but it is not clear whether this form refers to the same person as the form in line 3; one confusing factor is that the Finnish verb *lainata* means both ‘lend’ and ‘borrow’, so it is not clear whether Satu is the person involved in a potential lending or borrowing of the baby stroller.

⁴ Line 1 involves a false start. Susa first refers to Tupu with the pronoun *se* ‘s/he’ and then immediately self-repairs, starting the clause anew with *onks*.

We can interpret the use of *se yks* in Excerpt 2 as resulting from a shift in the participation framework (Goffman 1981), a contextual change accomplished with the use of the determiner. The form can be seen as being motivated by the fact that there is an overhearer; *se yks* would then simultaneously show that the referent is recognizable to the addressees (*se*) but not to the possible overhearer(s) who might eventually have access to the recording (*yks*). This would mean that the two parts of the expression would be directed toward two (sets of) people, the addressed participants as well as the overhearer(s).

In this section, we have seen that *se yks* is often used in narratives, in contexts where the referent is in the epistemic domain of the speaker, although it is also recognizable to the addressees. It can also be used as an “in the know” referential form, for the purpose of keeping the identity of the referent concealed from those who are not ratified participants or addressees at the moment of speaking.

4.2 *Se semmonen* in Category Negotiations

Several Finnish scholars have noted that the demonstrative adjective *semmonen*, roughly, ‘that kind; such’, is used for categorization. Erringer (1996) notes that in conversational data *semmonen* was used for classifying entities based on shared characteristics. Similarly, according to Vilkuna, *semmonen* orients to class (1992: 104), and can be used either specifically or

non-specifically (105). Helasvuo characterizes *semmonen* as an approximator or a hedge, and notes that it expresses non-prototypicality and reservations or uncertainty about membership in a category (1988: 93–95). According to Vilkuna, it often occurs in contexts where a speaker is looking for an appropriate word or expression (1992: 132; see also Erringer 1996: 60). All referents marked with *se semmonen* in my data were non-human; category may possibly be more relevant or more commonly at issue with regard to things rather than people.

In my data, as we might expect from earlier studies, *se semmonen* typically appears in the context of word searches and category negotiations. The next example shows such a case. The participants, a hairdresser (HAI) and her client (CLI) are discussing a recent robbery in the client's place of employment.

Excerpt 3: (SG108) face-to-face interaction

- 01 CLI: =kylhä mäki ku tunsin hänet<
of course I because(I) did know him
- 02 hh nii# niin tota noin:: #ö# eihä mun tarvinnu,
so um uh like of course I didn't need to
- 03 =emmä sillä lailla pelänny.
I wasn't afraid like that
- 04 [(.) mut] sitte ku hän rupes tulemaan sielt yli
but then when he started to come over it
- 05 HAI: [mt. hh]
- 06 CLI: nii sitte .hh sen tiskin yli nii sitte
so then .hh over the counter so then
- 07 (.) sit tietysti rupes pelkää[mään #että#,

then of course (one) became frightened so,

- 08 HAI: [.hh no eiks hän
so wasn't he
- 09 ollu mitenkää naamioitunu tai,=
in any way disguised or,
- 10 CLI: =.hh ol-i häne-llä silm-i-ssä tota noin:
be-PST 3SG-ADE eye-PL-INE PTC PTC
he did have over (his) eyes uh
- 11 => se< (.) semmonen (0.2) .mt huivi
DEM DEM-ADJ um scarf
that (.) kind of (0.2) um scarf
- 12 tietysti ku hän aatteli et mä annan kaasua,
of course cuz he thought I would pepper spray (him)

(0.3)
- 11 HAI: °ai:[:°
oh I see
- 12 CLI: [niin nii kyllä hän siihen oli varautunu.
so yeah he was prepared for that.
- 13 HAI: ai hänel ↑oli huivi.
oh he did have a scarf.

The client explains (lines 1–4, 6–7) that she was not afraid of the robber because she knew him, but when he started to climb over the counter, she became frightened. In lines 8–9, the hairdresser asks whether the robber was disguised in any way. The client responds that the robber was wearing something over his eyes (*silmissä* ‘on his eyes’) but seems to have trouble coming up with a suitable expression for the item, as shown by the slightly lengthened hesitation particle chain *tota noin*, the pause after *se* and after *semmonen*, and the click *.mt* before the actual lexical item *huivi* ‘scarf’, approximating what the robber was wearing. The determiner *se* functions here to mark the assumption that the addressee already has an idea of the

kind of thing robbers wear over their eyes, and *semmonen* expresses some reservations or uncertainty as to whether the item actually belongs to the class of scarves (cf., Helasvuo 1988: 93–95). However, the addressee accepts the categorization and uses the same lexical item, *huivi*, to refer to the robber's eye covering in line 13.

In Excerpt 3, the uncertainty about categorization and the word search can be seen as an attempt to build common ground – a function of demonstrative adjectives in general, according to Erringer (1998: 80). This function of *semmonen* is especially clear when it is involved in joint constructions, as in the next example. The participants, a group of friends, are talking about cross country skiing.

Excerpt 4 (SG440), face-to-face, informal interaction

- 01 KAI: **nii, (.) voihan se olla vähä vaikee toisaalta,**
yeah, it really can be a bit difficult too,
- 02 (0.6)
- 03 MAS: **nii ku ei oo ikin hiih[täny.**
yeah when (you) have never skied.
- 04 KAI: **[kyl mä huomasin**
I did notice
- 05 **vaikka mäki oon kuitenkin sillee hiihtäny**
even though I have in fact like skied
- 06 **ni [kyl oikeesti niinku #o-#,**
so it really did like,
- 07 TOI: **[nii,**
right
- 08 (0.4)
- 09 KAI: **sit,**

then

- 10 TOI: **kyl siin kestä[ä ennen ku sel löytää silleih,]**
it does take a while before you find like,
- 11 KAI: **[oot vähä sillee palikkana siel]lä,**
you're a bit like stiff there,
- 12 (2.2)
- 13 TOI: **ja sit niinku eka kerta, (0.6) jos om**
and then like first time, (0.6) if (it)'s been
- 14 **pitkä aika olluv vaik monta vu[otta hiihtämät**
a long time like many years without skiing
- 15 KAI: **[mm,**
- 16 TOI: **ni eka kerta sej jälkeen ni on, (0.2) ihan niinkup**
so first time after that (you)'re actually like
- 17 **paikat kipee[nä #sej jälkee# ku on niinku,**
sore afterwards when (you) have/are like,
- 18 KAI: **[nii on,**
that's true
- 19 (1.0)
- 20 **o[n,**
(you) are
- 21 TOI: => **[ei löy[däs sitä semmost**
NEG find-CONNNEG DEM-PAR DEM.ADJ-PAR
you can't find that kind of
- 22 KAI: **[on se,**
be DEM
that's right
- 23 TOI: **so[pivaa nii]ku?**
suitable-PAR PTC
suitable like?
- 24 KAI: **[rytmii,]**
rhythm-PAR
rhythm,
- 25 (0.8)

Kaisa has just finished telling about having really enjoyed skiing the last time she did. Masa has evaluated the story positively but has said he cannot ski, not having skied since he was in elementary school (not shown). Kaisa empathizes, agreeing that skiing can be difficult (line 1), and Masa reiterates the conditions under which this can be so (line 3). In lines 4–6, Kaisa starts a turn saying that even though she has been skiing, she has also noticed something, but she does not complete the turn syntactically, so that the object of noticing is not expressed. In overlap, Toini joins in, first with the affiliating particle *nii* (Sorjonen 2001: 181). After a short pause, Kaisa continues with a short *sit* ‘then’, but Toini comes in (line 10) with a contribution that could be a syntactic continuation of Kaisa’s incomplete turn in lines 4–6. However, she does not finish her turn either, leaving unspecified the object of *löytää* ‘find’. In overlap, in delayed completion (Lerner 1989, 1991; for Finnish, see Vatanen 2017), Kaisa then also completes her own turn, explaining that one is *palikkana* ‘like a block, stiff’. In this way, she on the one hand expresses that she agrees with what Toini is proposing, but also that she has her own stance on this matter (Vatanen 2014: 81–91), claiming independent access to the information, insisting on her own viewpoint and on her right to complete her own turn (Vatanen 2017).

Toini then continues in lines 13–14 and 16–17, explaining that if one has not skied for a long time, one is sore afterwards, but this turn is also left syntactically incomplete: the complement of *ku on niinku* ‘when you

have/are like' is not expressed. In overlap, in line 18, Kaisa responds with the particle chain *niin on*, which according to Sorjonen and Hakulinen (2009: 300), expresses strong agreement with something that is fully shared. It is clear that Toini and Kaisa are collaboratively building a stance here, but also competing on epistemic rights and on the right to tell.

Toini's turn in line 21 is not syntactically well fitted to her earlier, incomplete turn. Rather she reuses the verb *löytää* 'find' which she had used already in her contribution in line 10, in that way reprising what she had started to say. Here she uses the *se semmonen* construction (in partitive case, *sitä semmosta*, required by the negative polarity in the clause) as a hedge or approximator for what one cannot find when one is skiing after not having skied for a while. In overlap, Kaisa first responds with *on se* 'that's right', which both agrees with Toini's turn but also expresses that she and Toini have a different experience of what they are evaluating, and that its relevance for them is different; namely, this agreeing response format, with the verb repeat, *on*, coming before the subject *se*, indicates that Kaisa has primary epistemic access (Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2009: 138–143). Recall that Kaisa has been skiing recently, whereas Toini has not expressed that she would have had such an experience in the recent past. Consistent with this, again in non-transitional overlap, beginning before Toini has brought her turn to prosodic and syntactic completion, only having had time to say the first syllable of the next word after the *se semmonen* determiner, *sopivaa* 'suitable', but after Toini's *sitä semmosta*, Kaisa produces the missing item

rytmii ‘rhythm’ fitted not only temporally but also syntactically as a continuation of Toini’s *sitä semmosta*, since *rytmii* is also in the partitive case. In this way, Kaisa is collaboratively completing Toini’s turn, and building common ground, but in non-transitional overlap, well before Toini has completed her turn, showing that she has her own experience and stance in the matter (Vatanen 2014: 81–91). Thus we can see that *se semmonen* emerges in contexts where the participants are not just collaboratively but also competitively constructing common ground, expressing their epistemic stance and competing for epistemic rights to the categorization of shared referents.

We have seen that *se semmonen* is used in the context of category negotiations, when there is doubt about whether the item being referred to is a good fit for the category expressed by the lexical item used, as in Excerpt 3. It often occurs in word searches, and it can occasion a collaborative completion, and competition for epistemic rights, as in Excerpt 4. *Se semmonen* makes an appeal to the other participants, expressing both that the speaker expects them to be able to identify what type of referent is meant, and that the speaker is uncertain about its exact category, providing an opening for other participants to make a contribution, thus contributing to the building of intersubjective common ground.

4.3 *Se joku* in Mentions of Unimportant Referents

As noted, the expression *se joku* ‘that some’ was the most rarely used of the three expressions focused on in this study. This combination was used only four times in the data, although neither *joku* nor *se* were uncommon as determiners. As also noted, previous studies have shown that *joku* is used for referents that are not specific, that is, not uniquely identifiable, to either the speaker or the addressee (Vilkuna 1992), although Juvonen (2005: 197–198) shows that in her elicited narrative data it was also used for specific referents. Vilkuna (1992: 132) also notes, with a reference to Lepäsmä (1978), that *joku* is used for referents whose exact identity the speaker is indifferent about or has only second-hand knowledge about (1992: 33). In my data, speakers indeed seem to use *se joku* to refer to someone or something particular, but in contexts where the exact identity of the referent is not relevant.

In the next example there are two examples of the use of *se joku* as a determiner. This is an excerpt from a conversation between two couples. They vacationed together at Korgo some months earlier and are at present talking about what a popular vacation spot it is. Mirja has told about someone she sat next to at another party who had vacationed there and liked the place so much that he wanted to go again.

Excerpt 5: (SG 355), face-to-face, informal interaction

01 MIK: n- nii ja ja Jutta sano että
 yeah and and Jutta said that

02 hä-1 oj joku opettaja

- 3SG-ADE be.3SG some teacher
she knows some teacher
- 03 **siä-llä >on-k-s se ny< Pälkäneellä tai**
 DEM.LOC-ADE be-Q-CLI DEM PTC PN-ADE or
over there is it in Pälkäne or
- 04 **Luopioisissa jossakin kuitenkin sen**
 PN-INE some-INE-CLI anyway DEM-GEN
in in Luopioinen somewhere anyway in (her?)
- 05 => **niinkun siel jollakin alueella**
 like DEM.LOC-ADE some-ADE-CLI area-ADE
like there in some area
- 06 **siäl niin joka s'no että (.) onko se käyny**
over there who said that s/he has gone
- 07 **<viis vuotta> peräkkäi siä joka kesä**
five years in a row every summer there
- 08 **siä Korgossa e se tykkää nii siittä,**
over there in Korgo that s/he likes it so much,
- 09 MIR:=> **↑nii ja se joku toimittaja oli kato se:,**
 yes and DEM some journalist be-PST PTC DEM
yeah and that some journalist was you know s/he,
- 10 **(.)**
- 11 MIK: **nii se luki >se luki< lehdess**
yeah it said it said in the paper

In line 1, Mikko launches into a story he has heard from a person named Jutta. The story concerns a teacher whom Jutta knows and who has gone to Korgo several years in a row. Note that Mikko does not know the teacher himself, and the first reference to the teacher in line 2 is done with *joku* ‘some’ as a determiner. As suggested by Vilkuna (1992), here we are dealing with second-hand knowledge and a non-specific referent in the sense that the exact identity is not known to either the speaker or the addressees. That is, although it is clear that this mention refers to a

particular person (Juvonen 2005), Mikko does not know the exact identity of the teacher, and he does not expect the others to either.

The mention in lines 3–4 of the area where the teacher lives, *siel jollakin alueella* ‘over there in some area’ is initiated with the locative adessive form of *se* and the adessive form of *joku*. Using this form, Mikko expresses with *siel* ‘there’ that he has given enough information, the two place names Pälkäne and Luopioinen (lines 3 and 4), to make the general area identifiable, but *jollakin* ‘some’ expresses that the area mentioned is neither specific, nor uniquely identifiable, to either Mikko or his addressees. As with the initial mention of the teacher, we are dealing here with hearsay.

In line 9, Mirja brings up another person, a journalist, with a mention formatted with *se joku*. By using this form, she expresses with *se* that the referent is identifiable to at least one of her addressees, perhaps to Mikko, who has taken the prior turn and who also responds in line 11 to Mirja’s turn.⁵ With *joku*, Mirja expresses that the journalist’s exact identity is not important or perhaps even not known to Mirja and her addressee(s), and in that sense not specific. The mention remains the only one in this conversation. In line 11, after a short pause, Mikko responds with a turn starting with the particle *nii*, which would acknowledge Mirja’s contribution

⁵ One of the anonymous reviewers notes that Mirja’s turn can be seen as not brought to possible completion, presumably because the complement of *oli* is not expressed. Another interpretation is that this form is analeptically dependent on *onko se käynyt* ‘has s/he gone; she has gone’ in Mikko’s turn, so that what is meant is *oli käynyt (Korgossa)* ‘had gone to Korgo’. The past tense in Mirja’s turn could then be interpreted as indexing hearsay as well.

as something that he recognizes (Sorjonen 2001), and continues by suggesting that he remembers that what Mirja was referring to was in the paper, *se luki lehdessä* 'it said so in the paper'.

We have seen that *se joku* is used as a determiner in mentions of referents that the speaker believes are recognizable by the recipients, but whose exact identity is not known by either the speaker or the recipient. The referents mentioned using this form are treated as not relevant or important to what is being discussed; they are typically not rementioned and may even be verbally dismissed.

5 Conclusion

The examination of Finnish expressions which combine a definite and indefinite determiner in the same noun phrase has shown that identifiability is not a binary distinction, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon involving the expression of epistemic stance and also epistemic rights, the social issues having to do with what each person considers his or her own, and others', territory of knowledge. Moreover, these expressions emerge from their sequential contexts and are negotiated in interaction among the participants in conversation.

We have seen that the home environments of *se yks* 'that one' are informings and tellings, contexts where the speaker is presumed to have

primary epistemic access to a specific referent; previous studies have shown that *yks* is used as a determiner when the referent is specific to the speaker, but not to the addressee. *Se yks* may emerge when the speaker first assumes that a referent is recognizable by the addressee(s), but the response of the addressee is such that the speaker reformulates, as in Excerpt 1, showing that although s/he has reason to believe the addressee can in fact recognize the referent, perhaps from prior talk, the speaker has primary epistemic access. The use of *se yks* as a determiner may be followed by a lengthy negotiation about the identity of the referent, showing that the exact identity of the referent marked with *se yks* matters to the participants, who are also accountable for its recognizability, as shown in Excerpt 1. *Se yks* can also be used as an in-group referential form in order to conceal the identity of the referent from overhearers, as in Excerpt 2.

Se semmonen ‘that kind of’, on the other hand, emerges in the context of category negotiations and word searches; it is used when the speaker is uncertain about the category of the referent. The use of *se semmonen* can be followed by co-constructions, as its use may indicate that the speaker can use help in coming up with an appropriate term, especially since the expression also indexes identifiability of the referent to the addressee. In this way, sequences involving *se semmonen* in word searches can also become competitive, as in Excerpt 4. *Se semmonen* occurs only with non-human referents in my data; it may be that category negotiations are less common in references to humans.

Se joku ‘that some’ is less common in my data than the other two expressions. It occurs when the referent is identifiable, but not specific; the exact identity of the referent or even the referent itself is neither known nor important in its context. The referent tends not to be rementioned and may be dismissed altogether by the addressee as not relevant or worthy of discussion, as in Excerpt 5. A manifestation of this is that in these data, differently from *se yksi* and *se semmonen*, the determiner use of *se joku* never occasioned further negotiation regarding the identity of the referent.

We have seen that although there are indications in earlier research of the semantics and pragmatics of Finnish determiners, a study of real-time data from everyday interactions shows that each of the formats has its own home environment, in which it is used to do particular type of work in the service of the construction of intersubjective common ground.

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