Received: 22 December 2021 | Accepted: 15 August 2022

DOI: 10.1111/1460-6984.12786

International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders

RESEARCH REPORT

# People with aphasia and their family members proposing joint future activities in everyday conversations: A conversation analytic study

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**Funding information**
This research was partly supported by a grant awarded to the first writer by the Finnish Konkordia Fund.

## Abstract

**Background:** In everyday conversations, a person with aphasia (PWA) compensates for their language impairment by relying on multimodal and material resources, as well as on their conversation partners. However, some social actions people perform in authentic interaction, proposing a joint future activity, for example, ordinarily rely on a speaker producing a multi-word utterance. Thus, the language impairment connected to aphasia may impede the production of such proposals, consequently hindering the participation of PWAs in the planning of future activities.

**Aims:** To investigate (1) how people with post-stroke chronic aphasia construct proposals of joint future activities in everyday conversations compared with their familiar conversation partners (FCPs); and (2) how aphasia severity impacts on such proposals and their uptake.

**Methods & Procedures:** Ten hours of video-recorded everyday conversations from seven persons with mild and severe aphasia of varying subtypes and their FCPs were explored using conversation analysis. We identified 59 instances where either party proposed a joint future activity and grouped such proposals according to their linguistic format and sequential position. Data are in Finnish.

**Outcomes & Results:** People with mild aphasia made about the same number of proposals as their FCPs and used similar linguistic formats to their FCPs when proposing joint future activities. This included comparable patterns associated with producing a time reference, which was routinely used when a proposal initiated a planning activity. Mild aphasia manifested itself as within-turn word searches that were typically self-repaired. In contrast, people with severe aphasia made considerably fewer proposals compared with their FCPs, the proposal formats being linguistically unidentifiable. This resulted in delayed acknowledgement of the PWAs' talk as a proposal.

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**Conclusions & Implications:** Mild aphasia appears not to impede PWAs' ability to participate in the planning of joint future activities, whereas severe aphasia is a potential limitation. To address this possible participatory barrier, we discuss clinical implications for both therapist-led aphasia treatment and conversation partner training.

**KEYWORDS**
aphasia, conversation analysis, everyday conversation, proposals

## WHAT THIS PAPER ADDS

*What is already known on the subject*

- PWAs use multimodal resources to compensate for their language impairment in everyday conversations. However, certain social actions, such as proposing a joint future activity, cannot ordinarily be accomplished without language.

*What this paper adds to existing knowledge*

- The study demonstrates that proposing joint future activities is a common social action in everyday conversations between PWAs and their family members. People with mild aphasia used typical linguistic proposal formats, and aphasic word-finding problems did not prevent FCPs from understanding the talk as a proposal. People with severe aphasia constructed proposals infrequently using their remaining linguistic resources, a newspaper connecting the talk to the future and the support from FCPs.

*What are the potential or actual clinical implications of this work?*

- We suggest designing aphasia treatment with reference to the social action of proposing a joint future activity. Therapist-led treatment could model typical linguistic proposal formats, whereas communication partner training could incorporate FCP strategies that scaffold PWAs' opportunities to construct proposals of joint future activities. This would enhance aphasia treatment's ecological validity, promote its generalization and ultimately enable PWAs to participate in everyday planning activities.

## INTRODUCTION

Language enables humans to communicate about things beyond the present time and place. This allows for communicative activities such as telling stories about past occurrences or making plans for future actions. Aphasia, an acquired communication disability, affects interaction by, for example, limiting the linguistic resources available. In severe cases certain linguistic resources may be lost, while word-finding difficulty is a hallmark feature in milder cases (Raymer & Gonzalez Rothi, 2015). A substantial body of research on authentic aphasic interaction has demonstrated that, especially in severe aphasia, communication relies on a person with aphasia (PWA) using a repertoire of remaining linguistic and embodied resources, such as formulaic language, prosody or gestures (e.g., Beeke, 2003; Goodwin, 2010; Klippi, 2015), possibly combined with the use of artefacts, for example, a newspaper (e.g., Archer et al., 2018; Isaksen, 2018). Additionally, active collaboration by a familiar conversation partner (FCP) is essential in the construction of meaning (e.g., Goodwin, 1995, 2003; Tuomenoksa et al., 2022). While research has addressed storytelling in aphasia to some degree (e.g., Dipper & Cruice, 2018; Killmer et al., 2021), little is known about how PWAs engage in planning future activities (however, see Killmer et al., 2022), although it has been

recognized as an important communicative activity to be targeted in speech and language therapy (SLT). For example, the group therapy method intensive language–action therapy (ILAT) (Difrancesco et al., 2012) includes a planning game that encourages participants to propose joint activities to co-players, with the rationale of mobilizing verbs. The purpose of the current study is to examine how people with varying degrees of post-stroke, chronic aphasia construct proposals of joint future activities in authentic conversations with their FCPs. In the following, we will briefly outline the theoretical underpinnings of our study.

## Proposals as social actions

A social action refers to what a speaker performs through a turn in interaction, and what the recipient must consider in order to produce an adequate response (Levinson, 2013). Research in conversation analysis (CA) has documented that a social action in typical conversations may be accomplished with varying resources as well as combinations of resources (Levinson & Holler, 2014). For example, the social action of greeting can be done with embodied resources alone (e.g., by establishing eye contact and nodding), whereas other social actions, such as proposing a joint future activity, are typically achieved by producing multi-word utterances which are referred to as social action formats (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Stivers & Sidnell, 2016; Thompson et al., 2021).

Making a proposal is the first step of planning future activities (Houtkoop, 1987; Stevanovic, 2012). Thus, a proposal is one of numerous initiating social actions, that is, actions that create an expectation of a response (e.g., Schegloff, 2007: 13). Proposals aim to recruit the recipient to participate in a future activity, and are similar in that way to offers and requests (Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2015; Houtkoop, 1987; Stivers & Sidnell, 2016). Houtkoop (1987) differentiates between immediate and remote proposals; the former involves an action that can be put into practice at once, whereas the latter indicates an action to be performed at some point in the future. In this study, we focus on remote proposals, which can be defined through the concepts of agency and benefits (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014); a proposal implicates both speaker and recipient will participate in the future action, that is they possess joint agency, and both will benefit from the activity. In comparison, offers and requests are asymmetrical social actions in relation to agency and benefits. An offer entails the speaker to perform an action for the recipient's benefit, while a request denotes the speaker asking the recipient to act for the speaker's advantage (Clayman & Heritage, 2014; Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). For clarity, in this paper we will refer to a remote proposal as a proposal of joint future activity.

The social action of an episode of talk is often conveyed by its linguistic format (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Levinson, 2013). This serves both the speaker, who may formulate his/her turn such that the turn becomes recognizable and will receive a favourable outcome, and the recipient, who is provided with cues for understanding what the talk is doing. In English, proposals of joint future activities are commonly constructed with formats such as *Why don't we X* and *Let's X* (where X is the activity proposed), as well as modal declaratives and interrogatives such as *We could have dinner tomorrow* or *Should we make a salad?* (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Thompson et al., 2021). The choice of format has been found to depend on the proposal's sequential position in the conversation. In a study on children proposing new play activities, Stivers and Sidnell (2016) demonstrated that speakers used a *Let's X* construction to initiate a new activity, whereas *How about X* constructions were used to modify ongoing activity. It has also been demonstrated that a speaker chooses among different formats depending on how disposed they think the recipient is towards approving the proposal (Thompson et al., 2021). As regards sequential development, a proposal is prototypically accepted by its recipient, frequently with positive assessment and enthusiasm (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014).

## Proposals in Finnish

In Finnish, joint remote proposals are typically accomplished with declaratives or interrogatives (adding the clitic *-kO* to the verb) where the finite verb is in conditional mood (Hakulinen et al., 2004). However, a speaker may regulate the 'pressure' put on the recipient to engage in decision-making with the choice of proposal format. Stevanovic (2013) found that by framing a declarative proposal with 'what if' (*jos*), the speaker invites the recipient to engage, whereas framing a proposal by referring to the speaker's thoughts (e.g., 'I was thinking that') mitigates the pressure of an immediate decision. A special resource for negotiating future action in Finnish is the zero-person construction, which leaves the person reference of the action (i.e., the agent/s) open, and which in combination with a modal verb is often understood by the recipient as a proposal of joint future activity (Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2015).

## Proposals and aphasia

The research summarized above indicates that the social action of proposing of a joint future activity is typically accomplished through distinct linguistic formats. Consequently, this suggests that proposing a joint future activity

may be particularly challenging for PWAs. Further, the more severe the aphasia, the greater the challenge. To date, research on proposals as a part of planning future actions in everyday aphasic conversation is scarce. Previous studies have focused on planning talk in institutional settings and in relation to, for example, supporting PWAs in making decisions about SLT care (Isaksen, 2018). Barnes (2012) explored how an English-speaking person with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and his FCP constructed planning talk in a task-based activity (planning a trip the person with TBI intended to take), and found the talk to be asymmetrical as it was led by the FCP. Killmer et al. (2022) examined the planning talk of a German-speaking person with severe Wernicke's aphasia and his FCP in spontaneous conversation. They discovered that, in general, the sequential structure of the planning talk was similar to typical conversation, but with intervening cooperative word searches. They also found that the PWA's participation in the planning activity was supported by the FCP's communicative strategies; she both embraced the PWA's initiations and invited him to collaborate in talk she initiated. There is, however, no knowledge of how PWAs use, or possibly compensate for, the distinct linguistic proposal formats.

## Aims

CA-informed research on typical interaction has documented that proposing a joint future activity is typically accomplished through distinct linguistic formats, frequently constructed as multi-word utterances (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2015; Stevanovic, 2013). Knowledge of how PWAs accomplish such proposals is limited. Accordingly, using sequential analysis of authentic everyday conversation, and drawing on basic CA-findings of turn-taking, turn-construction and sequence organization, the aims of this study were (1) to investigate how PWAs, in comparison with their FCPs, constructed proposals of joint future activities; and (2) to explore how the severity of aphasia was reflected in the construction and the uptake of such proposals.

# METHOD

## Participants

Everyday conversation data for this study were collected as a part of the research project Treatment-Induced Speech and Language Improvement and Neuroplasticity after Stroke at the University of Helsinki, which compared the separate and combined effects of transcranial magnetic brain stimulation and ILAT (Heikkinen et al., 2019). The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The research protocol and its amendments were approved by the Local Ethics Committee for Clinical Trials, the Helsinki University Hospitals. Participation was voluntary, and participants received no reimbursement. Each participant gave written informed consent together with their significant others.

The study recruited 17 native speakers of Finnish through rehabilitation outpatient clinics and aphasia support groups in the region of Helsinki. All recruits had sustained a single left-hemisphere stroke resulting in aphasia at least 12 months previously. Exclusion criteria comprised global aphasia, neglect, agnosia, severe visual impairment or hearing loss, severe attention or memory deficits, severe depression, and additional neurological diagnoses. Aphasia was documented with the Finnish version of the Western Aphasia Battery (WAB) (Kertesz, 2005).

## Data collection

To capture authentic interaction, participants video-recorded ordinary conversations with a FCP for approximately 20–30 min at their homes on four occasions during the main research project. They were given no specific instructions concerning the contents of the conversations. The participants were equipped with a video-camera (Sony® Model HDR-CX-130) on a tripod and instructed on its use, after which they managed the recordings independently. Data were gathered between January 2012 and March 2014.

## Data analysis

The analytical procedure began with the first author viewing the data from all 17 participants, which totalled approximately 25 h of video recordings. Initial viewing demonstrated all dyads engaging in talk concerning future activities as a speaker talked either about their separate or joint remote activities. Thus, talk about future events appears to be a common communicative activity in everyday aphasic conversation. As the present study focused on proposals of joint future activities and aimed in this regard to compare PWAs with their FCPs, we excluded dyads who did not reciprocally engage in talk where a speaker identified both parties as agents as well as beneficiaries of a future action. This resulted in a data pool of 30 conversations from seven PWAs and their eight FCPs (i.e., one PWA had two conversation partners), totalling

**TABLE 1** Participant and conversation data

| PWA pseudonym (gender) | Age (years) | Aetiology | Duration of aphasia (years) | Aphasia type (WAB AQ) | FCP(s) | Duration of conversations (h:min:s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teppo (male) | 50 | Ischaemic stroke | 2.7 | Anomic (87.0) | Spouse | 01:20:44 |
| Anne (female) | 54 | Ischaemic stroke | 8.2 | Anomic (80.7) | Spouse | 00:47:58 |
| Irene (female) | 58 | Haemorrhage | 3.6 | Anomic (74.1) | Spouse | 01:16:03 |
| Kalle (male) | 47 | Haemorrhage | 1.4 | Anomic (71.1) | Spouse, daughter | 01:22:46 |
| Timo (male) | 37 | Ischaemic stroke | 1.0 | Conduction (72.2) | Spouse | 01:34:32 |
| Leila (female) | 62 | Ischaemic stroke | 2.8 | Conduction (61.7) | Spouse | 01:50:56 |
| Veikko (male)[a] | 72 | Ischaemic stroke | 4.4 | Broca (52.5) | Spouse | 02:05:39 |

*Note*: WAB AQ, Western Aphasia Battery Aphasia Quotient.
[a]See also Tuomenoksa et al. (2022).

10 h 18 min. According to information conveyed during the recordings themselves, the PWAs were living together with their FCPs. Participant information is presented in Table 1.

From these data, we identified candidate proposals. We sought for turns that were designed to do proposing a joint future activity. The search was not restricted to specific linguistic constructions. Nevertheless, such turns were often identifiable by the linguistic resources used: the turns were formatted as a shared future activity not yet decided upon, thus in need of joint approval and hence eliciting a response from the recipient. Additionally, a core CA principle, the next-turn proof-procedure (Sidnell, 2013), was used. It means that decisive for the identification of the phenomena of interest is how the recipient treats the talk (i.e., as a proposal). Sequentially a candidate proposal could either initiate a planning activity or appear within a larger planning activity. During this stage of analysis, the talk forming a candidate proposal as well as preceding and following talk was transcribed using standard CA conventions (Jefferson, 2004). Mondada's (2016) conventions for transcribing multimodality were applied when features such as pointing played an essential part in turn-construction. The first author transcribed and managed the data with the InqScribe® software. The transcripts were anonymised by replacing all proper names with pseudonyms.

In subsequent analysis, we formulated an understanding of the candidate proposals in the five dyads where the PWAs had mild aphasia, which we defined as WAB Aphasia Quotient ≥ 70. The candidate proposals were iteratively checked by comparing each instance's formatting (i.e., linguistic construction), sequential position and the social action it accomplished, and thereafter ruling out any instances fulfilling social actions other than proposals. Turns identified as proposals were then grouped according to linguistic format using previous CA knowledge on proposals (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2015; Hakulinen et al., 2004; Stevanovic, 2012, 2013). Next, data from the remaining two dyads with a PWA with severe aphasia, defined as WAB Aphasia Quotient < 70 were analysed in the same manner. This analysis made us aware of the significance of the proposal's sequential position and its relation to expressions referring to time. Thus, the groupings by linguistic format were supplemented with information on a proposal's sequential position (initiating a planning activity or within a planning activity) and whether or not the proposal entailed a time reference. Altogether, the analysis yielded a collection of 59 proposal sequences: 45 from dyads involving a person with mild aphasia and 14 from dyads involving a person with severe aphasia. Parts of the data were viewed and discussed in a data session with academics and doctoral students using CA in their research to check for transcription accuracy and to validate the analyses.

In the extracts we present, the talk of each person is depicted on two lines. The first line displays the original Finnish talk in italics, and the second, bolded line, a rough translation into English. For the target phenomenon (i.e., the proposal), a third line is added which presents an English word-by-word gloss. Where relevant, embodied actions are depicted on a fourth line (see Appendix A for a transcription and glossing symbol key).

## RESULTS

The linguistic formats used by both PWAs and FCPs when proposing a joint future activity are presented in Table 2. As expected, it shows that aphasia severity impacts on how proposals are constructed. People with mild aphasia most frequently used linguistic formats similar to their FCPs' proposals, and consistent with those regularly found in typical Finnish conversation. The most common format was a declarative clause, often with a modal verb such as *voida* ('could') or *pitää* ('should') (e.g., 'We could throw the

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**TABLE 2** Amount, type and sequential position of proposal formats by PWAs and FCPs

| Linguistic format of the proposal | Example | Cases in dyads with mild aphasia (produced by PWA) | Cases in dyads with severe aphasia (produced by PWA) | Proposal initiating a planning activity (produced by PWA) | | Proposal within a planning activity (produced by PWA) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Time reference | No time reference | Time reference | No time reference |
| Declarative clause, finite verb in conditional form | *Aamulla vois olla karjalanpi-irakoitaki* ('We could eat Karelian pasties in the morning') | 20 (11) | 4 (0) | 4 (1) | 0 | 7 (3) | 13 (7) |
| 'I was thinking that' prefaced proposal, verb in conditional form | *Mä aattelin et mentäis sunnuntaina ostamaan kukkia* ('I thought we could go and buy flowers on Sunday') | 9 (6) | 1 (0) | 3 (2) | 1 (1) | 2 (1) | 4 (2) |
| Interrogative clause, finite verb in conditional form | *Pitäiskö meidän ens viikonloppuna mennä mökille* ('Should we go to the cottage next weekend') | 8 (4) | 0 | 2 (1) | 0 | 2 (0) | 4 (3) |
| Declarative clause, finite verb in indicative form | *Pitää varmaan mennä se Kaffelin ruokajuttu syömään* ('We should probably take the meal thing at Kaffeli') | 5 (2) | 1 (0) | 2 (1) | 1 (0) | 2 (1) | 1 (0) |
| 'If' prefaced declarative clause | *Jos ens viikonloppuna lähtis jonneki ajelemaan* ('If we'd go for a drive next weekend') | 2 (1) | 2 (0) | 1 (1) | 0 | 2 (0) | 1 (0) |
| Interrogative clause, finite verb in indicative form | *Jatketaanks me sit matsin jälkeen* ('Should we continue after the match') | 1 (0) | 3 (0) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) |
| Linguistic format unidentifiable | (Extracts 3 and 4) | 0 | 3 (3) | 2 (2) | 0 | 0 | 1 (1) |
| Total | | 45 (24) | 14 (3) | 15 (8) | 3 (1) | 16 (5) | 25 (13) |

grill away'). The second most common format was a proposal framed with reference to a speaker's thoughts (e.g., 'I thought it would be nice to spend some time outside') (cf. Stevanovic, 2013). The third most common format was an interrogative clause with a finite verb in conditional mood (e.g., 'Should we go to the cottage next weekend'). These three linguistic formats accounted for 37 of the 45 proposals made by people with mild aphasia and their FCPs. Moreover, people with mild aphasia made slightly more than half of all proposals (24/45). This reveals speaker

symmetry in relation to who is proposing joint future activities in these dyads.

In contrast, people with severe aphasia made considerably fewer proposals compared with their FCPs; only three proposals of the 14 present in dyads where a person had severe aphasia were constructed by them. Furthermore, the linguistic format of such proposals differed from all other proposals in our data. This, as we will show below, resulted in atypical sequential development of the proposal sequences.

Table 2 also illustrates that expressions referring to the time point of the proposed activity, such as 'on Sunday', were frequent in our data, appearing in 31 of the 45 cases. However, the occurrence of a time reference was linked to the proposal's sequential position: it was regularly present in a proposal initiating a planning activity (15/18 cases), whereas its occurrence was more variable in proposals appearing within a planning activity (16/41 cases). Interestingly, PWAs showed similar patterns as their FCPs in the use of time reference. Also, initiating planning activities entailed a time reference irrespective of aphasia severity. Its format nevertheless varied, as will be demonstrated. In the next sections, we will focus on proposals of joint future activities made by people with mild and severe aphasia, respectively, presenting extracts which represent the turn-constructional and sequence-organizational patterns found across the dataset.

## Proposals by people with mild aphasia: tackling word-finding difficulties

In general, people with mild aphasia formulated turns that were unproblematically understood as proposals of joint future activity by their FCPs. Such proposals launched sequences that unfolded in typical ways. However, as extracts 1 and 2 will demonstrate, word-finding difficulties were common, but in most cases people with mild aphasia identified and solved the word-finding problem by themselves within the same turn (on repair activity, see Kitzinger, 2013).

People with mild aphasia were able to make proposals in both sequential positions, that is, initiating a planning activity or furthering talk within a planning activity. Extract 1 demonstrates a PWA, Irene, initiating a planning activity, which in our data typically entailed constructing a proposal that includes a time reference. The extract starts with Irene checking if the video camera is switched on. She then talks about her plan to call some friends (lines 3–5), which she gathers she could do the following day (line 7).

Irene formulates her proposal (line 9) as an 'If'-prefaced declarative clause with an explicit agent conveyed by 'we' combined with a verb in passive voice (a typical construction in Finnish) and using conditional mood. Producing the time reference presents obvious problems for her. She negates her interrupted expression *het-*, which could be interpreted as the beginning of *heti* ('now') (line 10) and starts counting the weekdays aloud while simultaneously finger-counting (line 11). Before stating the targeted time ('Saturday'), she repeats the verb 'go' in conditional mood *mentäis* (line 11) and continues to propose that they'll leave on Sunday. Heikki replies with the acknowledgement token *mm?* (line 13), which displays no great enthusiasm nor commitment to the proposed action (cf. Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Stevanovic, 2012). Irene orients to Heikki's non-committal reply by pursuing a response with the provision of an interrogative positive assessment 'Wouldn't that be quite nice' (line 14). After this, Heikki replies with a more explicit agreement 'sounds like a plan' (line 15).

Extract 2 presents another example of a person with mild aphasia making a proposal, this time within a larger planning activity. Before extract 2 Teppo, the PWA, and Merja, his spouse, have for some minutes been talking about their plans for the next few days; Merja has promised to pick up an acquaintance from the airport. Because of this, they intend to borrow a car from a friend. They are, however, unsure if the acquaintance is arriving tomorrow, Friday or on Friday of the next week. Hence, Merja needs to call another friend to check.

After a few seconds' lapse in the conversation, Teppo requests that Merja finds out (*ota selvää*) (i.e., makes the call to clarify the date) (line 2), and proposes additionally that they could borrow a car 'just for fun' (lines 2–3). The proposal is constructed with the most frequent format in our dataset: a declarative clause with the modal verb *voida* ('could') in the conditional mood and with zero-person reference, which in this context indicates both Teppo and Merja as agents as it is evident from previous talk that Teppo is the driver. The verb's enclitic particle *-hAn* adds a concessive tone to the proposal. At this point then, Teppo has produced a proposal of joint future activity, which however lacks an explicit time reference. Nevertheless, one could argue that the context provides an implicit one, that is, the upcoming Friday. The expected turn following Teppo's proposal would be Merja's acceptance or rejection, but instead there is a rather long pause (line 4). Next, Teppo increments his proposal by specifying the time *vaikka ens viikon perjantaina* ('say on next Friday') (line 5) and adds that they could also come up with something else to do (with the car). Again, Teppo uses a declarative construction with the verb in conditional mood and with zero-person reference. However, Merja starts her enthusiastic approval displayed by the enhanced rise–fall prosody (line 6), in overlap with Teppo's *ens vii* ('next wee-') but before he specifies Friday. This indicates Merja

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treated Teppo's initial proposal as 'complete' despite the lack of explicit time reference at that point. When Teppo's incremental turn is grammatically complete (line 7), Merja continues to embrace the proposal by stating that she'll certainly come up with something else to do (with the car) (line 8). Teppo interrupts the sequence by reminding Merja to switch off the coffee maker, but the topic is returned to later, when Merja states that they could make use of car in any case and pick up some things for their garden.

Word-finding difficulty linked to aphasia, was visible in both Irene's and Teppo's talk. For example, Irene relied on a strategy of counting the weekdays to arrive at her intended time point, and Teppo repaired phonological uncertainties through repetition. Nevertheless, both Irene

Extract (1)

| Line | Speaker | | Transcription |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Irene | | *onkse auki* |
| | | | **is it on** |
| 2 | Heikki | | *>on on<* |
| | | | **>yea yea<** |
| 3 | Irene | | *joo. joo. .hh niin no:in, niin esimerkiksi:, (1.7) >no mun pitää soittaa* |
| | | | **yeah yeah. .hh we:ll, say for example (1.7) >well I have to call** |
| 4 | | | *mäen oo soittanu< ö:m vielä, (.) niin, niin tuosta:hh (2.3) tuosta:, (3.0)* |
| | | | **I haven't called< u:m yet, (.) like, like abo:uthh (2.3) abo:ut, (3.0)** |
| 5 | | | *Liisasta ja Leosta mä: >mäen oo vielä soittanu< nii[le mutta, mutta,* |
| | | | **Liisa and Leo I: >I haven't called< the[m yet but, but,** |
| 6 | Heikki | | *[mm.* |
| | | | **[mm.** |
| 7 | Irene | | *vaikka? (.) vaikka? .hh ny- huomenna voisin soittaa ja [kysyä että, (.) että,* |
| | | | **like? (.) like? .hh ny- tomorrow I could call and [ask if, (.) if,** |
| 8 | Heikki | | *[mm.* |
| | | | **[mm.** |
| 9 | Irene | → | *jos me: kato mentäis niin että, (.) että:, se olis,* (1.8 ((SWALLOWS)) |
| | | | if we PRT go-PASS-COND so that that it be.3SG-COND |
| | | | **if we: like we'd leave so that, (.) tha:t, it would,** |
| 10 | | | *niin noin, (1.0) niin, (1.9) että mentäis (het-) e:i e:i, (1.2)* |
| | | | PRT PRT PRT that go-PASS-COND NEG NEG |
| | | | **say like, (1.0.) like, (1.9) that we'd leave (het-) no: no:, (1.2)** |
| 11 | | | **maanantai tiistai keski(viikko) torstai perjantai, .hh ni mentäis* |
| | | | Monday Tuesday Wednes(day) Thursday Friday PRT go-PASS-COND |
| | | | ***Monday Tuesday Wednes(day) Thursday Friday, .hh so we'd leave** |
| | | | *((finger-counting days → |
| 12 | | | *lavvantaina ja sitte lähdettäis pois sunnuntaina.** |
| | | | Saturday-ESS and then leave-PASS-COND away Sunday-ESS |
| | | | **on Saturday and then return on Sunday. *** |
| | | | →)) * |
| 13 | Heikki | | *m:m?* |
| | | | **m:m?** |
| 14 | Irene | | *eiks se olisi ihan kiva.* |
| | | | **wouldn't that be quite nice.** |
| 15 | Heikki | | *se sopis (kyl[lä)* |
| | | | **sounds like a plan (yes)** |
| 16 | Irene | | *[niin on.* |
| | | | **[that yes.** |
| 17 | Heikki | | *.joo* |
| | | | **.yeah** |

and Teppo solved these word-finding problems by themselves, and importantly, the problems did not impede the recipients from recognizing the social action the PWAs performed with their talk, namely a proposal of join future activity.

## Proposals by people with severe aphasia: atypical turn-constructions and delayed acknowledgement

Unsurprisingly, our data demonstrated that the more severe the aphasia, the more limited was the ability to construct a proposal of joint future activity. The two persons with severe aphasia made only three proposals of joint future activity compared with 11 proposals made by their FCPs. Extracts 3 and 4 demonstrate how the persons with severe aphasia constructed their proposals. We will argue that the severe linguistic impairment hinders the production of the proposal, and as such delays the acknowledgement of the social action to be one of making a proposal.

In Extract 3, the participants discuss a trip to the food market to get the ingredients for a Frankfurter soup. It presents a PWA, Leila, making two proposals. The first is in an initiating position, and the second is within the ongoing planning activity. Leila is sitting by the kitchen table while Pekka, her spouse, prepares lunch. The extract begins as Leila initiates a new topic following a lapse in the conversation of 10.2 s.

After some hesitation, Leila produces the time-reference 'tomorrow' (line 1), which in this turn-initial position serves as an important and early clue to the social action she performs with her talk (Levinson, 2013); if she does not repair the word, she is probably not going to tell a story about past events, for example. The subsequent formulation of the turn is grammatically unclear. The verb 'go' (*lähetäi*, line 1) is in passive form implicating joint activity, while the end of the word is phonologically distorted but is reminiscent of the conditional mood ending *-is(i)*. Further, the location of the activity *mannii* (line 2) is semantically ambiguous; possibly a neologism or a shortened (but not typical) form of Stockman (a store). However, despite this semantic ambiguity the word is in the correct case (illative) for a location, the *-iin* ending indicating 'to'

Extract (2)

| Line | Speaker | | Transcription |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | (3.1) |
| 2 | Teppo | → | *.hhh mutta ota selvää. koska siis voishan sitä niinku tota* |
| | | | but take-IMP clear-PAR because PRT Ø can.3SG-COND-CLI it-PAR PRT PRT |
| | | | **.hhh but find out. because one could like uhm** |
| 3 | | | *noin niin, laina- lainata (.) <lainata> autoo muuten ↑VAA:N.* |
| | | | PRT PRT borro- borrow-INF borrow-INF car-PAR otherwise just |
| | | | **kind of, borro- borrow (.) <borrow> a car just for fun** |
| 4 | | | (0.9) |
| 5 | Teppo | | *vaik[ka ens vii]kon perjantaina ja keksis jotain muuta=* |
| | | | PRT next week-GEN Friday-ESS and Ø invent.3SG-COND something else |
| | | | **say [on Friday next week and one could come up with something else=** |
| 6 | Merja | | *[↑joo. ]* |
| | | | **[↑yeah. ]** |
| 7 | Teppo | | *= tekemistä sitten [niin kun (siihen), e:i mut siis,* |
| | | | doing-PAR then PRT PRT it-ILL NEG but PRT |
| | | | **= to do then [like, no: but,** |
| 8 | Merja | | *[no mä keksin kyllä muutakin tekemistä koska tota:,* |
| | | | **[well I'll surely come up with something else to do 'cause** |
| 9 | Teppo | | **nyt tosta vielä painetaan tosta toi sitte viimeisenä toi,* |
| | | | ***now you must push on that to finish** |
| | | | *((pointing to the kitchen)) |
| 10 | Merja | | *kiitos ku muistutit* |
| | | | **thanks for reminding me** |

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Extract (3)

| Line | Speaker | | Transcription |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Liisa | → | *toi, (1.5) k- huomenna tuota, .hh (.) tä- >tuota< .hh o- lähetäi* |
| | | | that tomorrow PRT PRT leave-(PASS.COND) PHON DIS |
| | | | **uhm, (1.5) k- tomorrow well, .hh (.) tä- >uhm< .hh o- leave** |
| 2 | | | *k- ki- tonne, manniin ku(han) käydään (1.4) tela-* |
| | | | to there manni-ILL PRT go-PASS thera- PHON DIS |
| | | | **k- ki- over to, the manni after we've had (1.4) thela-** |
| 3 | Pekka | | *Puheterapias* |
| | | | **speech language therapy** |
| 4 | Liisa | | *nii.* ((nods)) |
| | | | **yea.** |
| 5 | | | (1.2) |
| 6 | Pekka | | *↑ruoka, (0.5) ↓kauppa[an,* |
| | | | **↑to the food, (0.5) ↓ mark[et** |
| 7 | Liisa | | *[kauppaan nii.* ((nods)) |
| | | | **[to the market yea.** |
| 8 | Pekka | | *mennään vaan.* |
| | | | **yea let's go.** |
| 9 | | | (4.0) |
| 10 | Pekka | | *onks sul (jo) jottain erikoista mielessä* |
| | | | **do you already have something special in mind** |
| 11 | Liisa | | *e:i mutta,* |
| | | | **no: but,** |
| 12 | | | (1.6) |
| 13 | Pekka | | *me ei olla pitkään aikaan tehty keittoo* |
| | | | **we haven't made soup in a long time** |
| 14 | Liisa | → | *keitto. ↑toi, khh (.) (haetaan) (onko) toi, (.) hh .hh* |
| | | | soup that fetch-PASS be.3SG-Q that |
| | | | **soup.↑ um, khh (.) (should we get) (is there) um, (.) hh .hh** |
| 15 | | | *kakkikei- keitto* |
| | | | Frankfurter soup PHON DIS soup |
| | | | **Frankfurter sou- soup** |
| 16 | | | (2.6) |
| 17 | Pekka | | *vaik [ka?* |
| | | | ***why [not?*** |
| 18 | Liisa | | *[joo? joo? joo?* |
| | | | **[yea? yea? yea?** |
| 19 | Pekka | | *tai sitten ihan jostain muustaki* |
| | | | **or of entirely something else** |
| 20 | Liisa | | *ei kun ka:k- ta ka:k- toi, (.) kak- toi, (1.6) kakkikeitto* |
| | | | **no I want ka:k- ta ka:k- uhum, (.) kak- uhum, (1.6) Frankfurter soup** |
| 21 | Pekka | | *nakki* |
| | | | **Frankfurter** |
| 22 | Liisa | | *joo. (.) nakkiheitto* |
| | | | **yes. (.) Frankfurter soup.** |
| 23 | Pekka | | *selvä homma.* |
| | | | **all right./that's settled then.** |

somewhere. Leila continues with another time reference *ku(han)* which may be 'after', followed by the verb 'go' in passive form, and ends her turn with signs of a word search. She interrupts her talk after producing the first two syllables of the word 'therapy', partly phonemically distorted, and gazes at Pekka, which is a common way of soliciting the recipient's help (Rossano, 2013). In summary, Leila has initiated a sequence by producing a turn with a turn-initial future time reference and two verb forms indicating joint activity separated by the time defining 'after', and an unclear place reference; there is also an incomplete word search.

Next, Pekka provides a candidate word to resolve Leila's word-finding problem, specifying the therapy as SLT (line 3), which Leila acknowledges (line 4). FCPs commonly offer words to complete PWAs' word searches (Laakso, 2015), but what follows is not what ordinarily would be expected after a proposal, that is, an agreement or further negotiation of the proposal. Instead of a response to the proposal there is a lengthy pause (line 5). This is followed by an insert sequence, talk that intervenes between an initiation and its 'adequate' response (Schegloff, 2007). The insert sequence begins with Pekka addressing Leila's problematic place reference *mannii* by producing the compound word 'food market' with marked staccato-style prosody (line 6). As such, it launches a turn resembling phonological cueing, which is a typical strategy in SLT for prompting a PWA to produce a target word (e.g., Hickin et al., 2002). Similar turns are also found in naturally occurring aphasic conversations with FCPs, where they likewise seem to function as a model for a PWA to produce a correct word or sentence (Bauer & Kulke, 2004; Beeke et al., 2014). In this instance, Leila does not completely align with Pekka's activity, but approves the word choice by nodding, repeating the second part of the word and adding the confirmation particle *nii* (line 7), which closes the insert sequence. Only after this delay, encompassing the pause at line 5 and the language-exercise sequence (lines 6–7), comes Pekka's explicit approval of the proposal to go to the food market tomorrow (line 8), which displays he has understood Leila's turn as a proposal of joint future activity.

After a few seconds' lapse (line 9) Pekka furthers the topic by asking a question that has the potential to elicit further talk from Leila. Pekka asks if Leila has something special in mind (line 10), and after receiving a negative answer (line 11), he states they haven't had soup in a long time (line 13). For Leila, this creates a context where she may produce talk, which can be understood in reference to previous talk, that is, within the planning activity of going to the food market tomorrow. On line 14 Leila proposes that they'll get Frankfurter soup, the construction lacking a reference to time. The noun is phonetically distorted, and the grammatical format is unclear, but the proposal has components of both jointness (i.e., verb in passive form) and negotiation (*onko* 'is there'). Nevertheless, Pekka's partial agreement ('why not'; line 17) indicates that he has recognized Leila's turn as a proposal connected to the current topic of plans for visiting the food market, which they then continue to negotiate (lines 18–20). The sequence closes with Pekka's explicit approval (line 23).

Extract (4) from another person with severe aphasia, highlights how the use of an artefact may at least partly compensate for language when proposing a joint future activity (for a more thorough analysis of the extract's embodied actions, see Tuomenoksa et al., 2022). In this extract, the participants discuss a popular singing television show titled *Grab the Mike*. As the extracts begins Veikko, the PWA, and his spouse Anja, are seated at their kitchen table, each reading a section of the newspaper.

While pointing at the television guide he is reading, Veikko initiates a new topic with a turn replete with word-finding difficulties, indicated by multiple search particles and pauses (line 1). He produces the words *joubuu: mikkii*, the first being incomprehensible, and the second understandable as the noun 'mike' (meaning microphone). In overlap with Anja's acknowledgement token *mm?* (line 3), Veikko elaborates by constructing a declarative clause beginning with 'there is', but specifying the referent is difficult, again evident from the search particle and pauses. He utters two neologisms *olni nonnimonni*, with a falling intonation signalling the end of this turn (line 4). Next, Anja repeats part of Veikko's initiation, however correcting the *joubuu: mikkii* to *tartu mikkiin* ('grab the mike'). Veikko enthusiastically confirms Anja's interpretation (line 7). They have thus established, that Veikko is talking about the television show *Grab the Mike*, which is a musical game show presenting different artists. From Anja's repair initiation (line 8) it is however apparent that she does not know who (i.e., which musician) Veikko is talking about. Veikko produces another neologism and a distorted word that can in the context be heard as a proper name, but he displays with the repair particle *eiku* that he didn't get the name right (line 13). Nevertheless, Anja recognizes the musician as 'the terrible one' (line 15) and tries to recollect the band the musician plays in (lines 19–20).

In summary, Veikko's turns (lines 1, 4 and 13) contain no grammatical constructions pointing to joint activity, nor a verbal reference to future time. However, after a long lapse in the conversation of 12 seconds Anja comments that there is 'no need to watch' (the show) (line 22), which indicates she has understood Veikko's multimodal initiation as a proposal to watch the programme. Her account 'I can at least not stand him' (line 24) after Veikko's dialogue

Extract (4)

| Line | Speaker | | Transcription |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Veikko | → | *noh*e:m, (0.8) (puhe:) >tota< puhh (3.2) mt toi, (1.2) joubuu: mikkii.* |
| | | | PRT uhm that NEO mike-ILL |
| | | | **wel*lhe:m,(0.8) (puhe:) >well< puhh (3.2) mt the, (1.2) joubuu mike.** |
| | | | *((points at the newspaper)) |
| 2 | | | (1.6) |
| 3 | Anja | | *[mm?]* |
| | | | **[mm?]** |
| 4 | Veikko | → | *[tuossa on] (0.7) e- tota: (0.3) e- o:n: (2.2) olni (.) >nonnimonni.<* |
| | | | there be-3SG uhm be-3SG NEO NEO |
| | | | **[there's ] (0.7) e- we:ll (0.3) e- i:s: (2.2) olni (.) >nonnimonni.<** |
| 5 | | | (0.4) |
| 6 | Anja | | *tartu mikkii[n.* |
| | | | **grab the mi[ke.** |
| 7 | Veikko | | *[£nii.£ =* |
| | | | **[£yeah.£=** |
| 8 | Anja | | *>ni KEtä,< (0.4) ketäs sanoit* |
| | | | **>so WHo,< (0.4) who did you say** |
| 9 | | | (3.2) ((Veikko gazes at the newspaper and leans forwards to it)) |
| 10 | Anja | | *eiku *tuolla* |
| | | | **no *there** |
| | | | *((points at Veikko's newspaper)) |
| 11 | Veikko | | *nii.* |
| | | | **yeah.** |
| 12 | | | (0.8) |
| 13 | Veikko | → | *(nyt) tuota: o:nga Y:ynströmi. (0.3) eiku,* |
| | | | now uhm NEO PROP.PHON DIST PRT |
| | | | **(now) we:ll o:nga Y:ynströmi. (0.3) no but,** |
| 14 | | | (1.0) |
| 15 | Anja | | *ai se kauhee.* |
| | | | **oh the terrible one.** |
| 16 | Veikko | | *£nii.£* |
| | | | **£yeah.£** |
| 17 | Anja | | *juu >ei ei ei< se. (.)* |
| | | | **yea. >no no no< that (one).** |
| 18 | | | (1.0) |
| 19 | Anja | | *uman uman vai >mikäs se< e:iku (0.7) missä se onkaan. (0.7)* |
| | | | **uman uman or >what was it< no: (0.7) where is he/she. (0.7)** |
| 20 | | | *mikä yhtye se onkaan.* |
| | | | **what band is ist now.** |
| 21 | | | (12.0) ((Anja eats and sips , Veikko reads the newspaper)) |
| 22 | Anja | | *ei tarvii kattoa* |
| | | | **no need to watch** |
| 23 | Veikko | | *ai.* |
| | | | **oh.** |
| 24 | Anja | | *(-) en mää ainakaan kestä sitä* |
| | | | **(-) I can't at least not stand him** |
| 25 | Veikko | | *ei. ei,* |
| | | | **no. no,** |

particle 'oh' (line 23), displays her interpretation to be that they watch the show together. We argue that an important feature for Anja to comprehend Veikko's turns as a proposal of joint future activity was the fact that like most proposals initiating a planning activity in our data set, it entailed a time reference: Veikko was pointing to the listings of television programmes—a resource inherently referring to time. As we saw in extract 3, here the FCP's acknowledgement of the PWA's talk as a proposal is delayed. It is evident that establishing the television show and the musician needed collaborative repair-work (lines 6–16), which formed an insert sequence between the initiation of a proposal and the expected next turn response.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined how people with mild and severe aphasia construct a frequent social action typically executed through the use of specific linguistic formats: proposing a joint future activity. Our analysis demonstrated that aphasia severity impacts on both the frequency and the construction of such proposals in Finnish, as well as how the proposals are treated by the FCPs.

People with mild aphasia produced a comparable number of proposals to their FCPs. Further, when constructing their proposals, people with mild aphasia used similar linguistic formats to their FCPs, which also are common in typical Finnish conversations. Although the proposals contained word searches attributable to aphasia, people with mild aphasia constructed turns that were unproblematically comprehended as proposals of joint future activity by their FCPs.

In contrast, people with severe aphasia produced strikingly fewer proposals compared with their FCPs, the proposals being fragmented both semantically and grammatically. We demonstrated how this resulted in delayed acknowledgement of the PWA's talk as a proposal; one FCP engaged in phonological cueing to elicit correct word production before approving the proposal (extract 3), whilst another responded after a considerable lapse, the reason for which is unclear (extract 4). People with severe aphasia nevertheless accomplished the social action of proposing a joint future activity.

Our analysis revealed a future time reference to be a common linguistic element in proposals of joint future activity, which was routinely used when initiating planning activities. People with mild aphasia exhibited similar patterns as the FCPs in their use of time reference. People with severe aphasia also oriented to the practice of constructing an initiating proposal with a time reference; Leila through linguistic resources (the turn-initial time reference 'tomorrow'), and Veikko by pointing to an artefact (the television guide). Noteworthily, they both produced a time reference in turn-initial position. Linguistic elements placed in turn-initial position are pivotal as they provide the recipient with an early clue about the pending action type, hence assisting them to accomplish an adequate and timely response (Levinson, 2013). Thus, Leila's and Veikko's turn construction strategy appears advantageous for both them and their FCPs. A turn-initial time reference has been noted as a device to compensate for other interactional difficulties in aphasia, for example the difficulty for English speakers with non-fluent aphasia of marking temporal aspects of verbs (Beeke et al., 2003).

### Limitations and further research

Our data included only two dyads where the person had severe aphasia, thus the findings for severe aphasia may reflect more individual communication styles than general patterns. Hence, more research is needed of people with severe aphasias' practices of constructing proposals of joint future activities as well as their FCPs' strategies to support PWAs' participation in planning activities. Further, our data did not include any occasions where a PWA's turn was misunderstood as a proposal by a FCP, that is, instances which could have provided for a 'deviant case' analysis. In the future, a larger dataset with the potential for such cases to be included could yield a more robust understanding of proposing joint future activities in aphasia.

### Conclusions and clinical implications

The present study demonstrates that in conversations with their intimates, people with mild aphasia accomplish the social action of proposing a joint future activity using linguistic formats that are typical in Finnish planning talk, and in the presence of self-repaired word searches. The small number of proposals made by people with severe aphasia appear to reflect their limited linguistic resources. This highlights the need for measures to promote the ability of people with severe aphasia to participate in planning activities. To this end, we suggest our findings have twofold clinical implications.

First, we recommend designing SLT treatment with reference to everyday social actions by incorporating the linguistic features typically used to perform such actions. This could both enhance an intervention's ecological validity and promote its generalization. In practice, this entails bringing the accomplishment of a social action to the centre of an aphasia therapy activity. For example, instead of using descriptive language to target nouns and verbs in

game-like group therapy activities (e.g., 'I have the man eating at a restaurant' as a description of a picture) (cf. Difrancesco et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2013), we suggest focusing on achieving a social action. Concerning proposals of joint future activities, an SLT could facilitate PWAs with mild aphasia to produce utterances specifying the agents, the activity, and the future time reference using the linguistic formats found to be connected to proposals in typical conversation, such as 'Why don't we eat at a restaurant tonight'. For people with severe aphasia, a proposal with a turn-initial future time reference, potentially combined with the use of a time-containing artefact, could be modelled and practiced. A time-reference in a fronted position both promotes the identification of the social action and has the potential to compensate for language impairment (Levinson, 2013).

Second, we see potential for communication partner training to recognize and address specific social actions such as proposing a joint future activity. Extract 3 illustrated the FCP furthering the PWA-initiated planning activity by presenting the question 'Do you already have something special in mind' as well as the comment 'We haven't made soup in a long time'. These turns created a conversational context where the PWA could construct a second proposal within an ongoing planning activity, that is, in a sequential position where a future time reference is not essential, hence demanding less linguistic resources. Importantly, the FCP's actions supported the PWA's participation within a planning activity, a finding that coincides with Killmer et al. (2022).

As a whole, our implications link to Wilkinson's (1999) proposal that treatment in severe aphasia should target possible sequential problems, in other words the recognizability of a PWA's social action, through communication partner training, whilst traditional impairment-based tasks could improve word-finding difficulties regardless of social action, thus benefitting people with mild aphasia.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Video data that support the findings of this study are not available due to privacy or ethical restrictions. Anonymized transcriptions derived from the videos are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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**How to cite this article:** Tuomenoksa, A., Beeke, S. & Klippi, A. (2023) People with aphasia and their family members proposing joint future activities in everyday conversations: a conversation analytic study. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 58, 310–325. https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12786

International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders



**TABLE A1** Transcription key (Jefferson, 2004) and glossing symbols

| Symbol | Definition and use |
|---|---|
| [ | A large left-hand bracket links an ongoing utterance with an overlapping utterance or non-verbal action at the point where the overlap/simultaneous non-verbal action begins. |
| ] | A large right-hand bracket marks where overlapping utterances/simultaneous non-verbal actions stop overlapping. |
| ((text)) | Text in double brackets describe the participants' non-verbal actions. The start and end points of simultaneous talk and non-verbal actions are indicated with an asterisk on each line. |
| = | An equal sign marks where there is no interval between adjacent utterances. |
| (0.5) | Numbers in single brackets indicate silence represented in tenths of a second. |
| (.) | A full stop in single brackets indicates a micropause, i.e. an interval of less than one tenth of a second in the stream of talk. |
| . , ? | Markers of intonation countour:<br>Final falling intonation (.)<br>Slight rising intonation (,)<br>Sharp rising intonation (?) |
| ↑ | An upward arrow indicates a sharp rise in pitch. |
| : | A colon indicates an extension of the sound or syllable it follows. |
| (talk) | Single brackets containing either a word, phrase, or syllable mark where the target item(s) is/are in doubt. |
| (–) | Dashes in single brackets designate the number of syllables heard but remaining obscure. |
| ny- | A single dash indicates an abrupt cut-off to a word or a part of a word. |
| >talk< | Lesser than/greater than signs indicate sections of talk delivered at a greater speed than surrounding talk. |
| TALK | Capital letters indicate talk delivered at a louder volume than surrounding talk. |
| £talk£ | Pound sterling signs indicate talk delivered with an auditorily recognisable smiling voice. |
| → | An arrow beside a speaker's name alert the reader to talk that is central for the analysis. |
| Ø | zero person marking |
| 3 | third person |
| CLI | clitic |
| COND | conditional |
| IMP | imperative |
| INF | infinitive |
| NEG | negation |
| NEO | neologism |
| PASS | passive |
| PHON DIS | phonological distortion |
| PROP | proper name |
| PRT | particle |
| SG | singular |
| Q | question clitic |
| ESS | essive (Finnish case) |
| GEN | genitive (Finnish case) |
| ILL | illative (Finnish case) |
| PAR | partitive (Finnish case) |