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ARTICLE

Opening before closing: The porosity of encounters-in-a-series

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Abstract

This article addresses classical issues in conversation analysis related to the overall structural organization of social interaction, achieved through opening and closing sequences. While the integrity and autonomy of social interaction are most often oriented to by participants in single interactions, the study of some institutional interactions shows that forms of porosity between encounters do exist, in which one encounter impinges on another. This is the case of encounters-in-a-series, in which a new encounter is opened as the previous is not yet closed. The article examines interactions in which participants orient to the preservation of the integrity of successive encounters, contrasted with cases in which the initiation of the opening of a new encounter happens during or before the closing of the previous, and discusses how and when this is treated as normatively delicate or not, within the participants' local endogenous analysis of the overall structural organization of the interaction. (Social interaction, conversation analysis, multimodality, overall structural organization, opening, closing, encounters-in-a-series, porosity)

Introduction

As demonstrated by important scholarly work in conversation analysis (CA), participants in social interaction orient to the autonomy and integrity of single encounters; they engage in the organization of opening sequences to initiate the coordinated collective entry into a new encounter (Schegloff 1968, 1986), and organize closing sequences to bring the encounter to an end in convergent and aligned ways (Schegloff & Sacks 1973). Openings and closings circumscribe the overall structural organization (Robinson 2012) characterizing the interaction as a whole, understood as a clearly delimited event.

However, in some situations, social interactions have a relative *porosity* (see also Mondada 2025): participants engage in a new interaction without having properly closed the previous one, transitioning from one encounter to the next without considering the clear-cut boundaries between the encounters. This can be empirically observed in series of interactions such as service encounters, in which several customers are queuing, and the salesperson moves from one encounter to the next, often without any time out. In these serial encounters, participants might orient toward the autonomy of the interaction as being relativized by the porosity between

interactions and could therefore treat possible tensions between autonomy and porosity as problematic (or not). These phenomena not only characterize specific types of social activities but also reveal the more fundamental sequential organizational features of social interaction, as well as their normativity—the question being how early an opening can be initiated when a previous closing is not yet complete, how participants orient to this earliness, and what the organizational and normative consequences of such earliness are.

Based on a rich corpus of encounters in shops, video-recorded in French-/Italian-/German-speaking Switzerland and France, this article explores the sequential-organizational potentialities of the porosity between serial encounters, as they are oriented to, orchestrated, and witnessed by the participants themselves. Indeed, phenomena of porosity highlight the way participants endogenously orient to the overall organization of social interaction in both flexible-adaptable and normative ways.

Porous encounters reveal the participants' local treatment of the closing of the previous encounter and the opening of the next as being either expectedly clear-cut or possibly more intertwined: in some cases, they orient to the autonomy and integrity of each encounter as normatively expected, in others as possibly being relaxed. This article investigates the circumstances and sequential environments that favor the one or the other. This enables us to explore the relations between openings and closings, closings and openings, their organizational features, and their normative aspects.

This discussion is developed in empirical analyses showing (a) cases of clear-cut boundaries achieved by the participants closing the previous encounter before opening the next; (b) cases of early transitions to the opening of the next encounter before the previous encounter is closed—revealing the potential organizational opportunities of porosity, which are also related to phenomena of monitoring, overseeing/overhearing one encounter from the perspective of the next; (c) deviant cases in which the participants normatively orient to the absence of proper closing; and (d) cases in which participants witnessably initiate a new encounter as the previous is clearly still ongoing.

Background

Overall structural organization, openings and closings

Since its origins, CA has been interested in 'the overall structural organisation of the unit "a single conversation"' (Schegloff 2007:263). The entire conversation is the maximal unit of analysis, and openings and closings have been the main topics of inquiry in this global order (Robinson 2012:275). In the formulation of Sacks, overall organization deals 'roughly, with beginnings and endings, and how beginnings work to get from beginnings to something else, and how, from something else, endings are gotten to. And also the relationship—if there is one—between beginnings and endings' (1992:157). In this article, I am interested in how and when this unity can become *porous*—that is, when a social interaction is not just opened and closed but possibly impinges on another interaction beginning before the current one is closed. In turn, this calls attention to the relations between closings and openings of two distinct interactions (rather than between the opening and the closing of a single conversation).

Openings have been massively studied in CA, detailing the conditions in which two or more parties achieve their coordinated entry into a joint course of action. After an initial focus on phone conversations, where the ringing of the phone works as a summons clearly delimitating the call as a unit from its surroundings (Schegloff 1968, 1986), face-to-face interactions have also been studied (Kendon & Ferber 1973; Heath 1981; Robinson 1998; Pillet-Shore 2018, 2021) thus showing the complexity related to the ordering of multimodal practices, the visual accessibility of the participants, and the characteristics of the local ecology, while also revealing the frequent uncertainty—for researchers as well as imminent would-be co-participants—of when exactly the interaction begins (D'Antoni, Debois, De Stefani, Hänggi, Mondada, Schneerson, & Tekin 2022).

Closings have attracted less attention, despite the seminal paper by Schegloff &Sacks (1973) detailing the conditions in which interaction can be brought to an ending by the parties and showing how pre-closings prepare and project closings (see Bolden 2017). Studies of closings have discussed actions that can suspend them (Button 1990), extend them (Davidson 1978), and abruptly precipitate them (e.g. when one party unilaterally walks out; Dersley & Wootton 2001; Llewellyn & Butler 2011). The way embodied closings are organized shows the multiplicity of multimodal resources involved and the importance of the material-spatial ecology (Heath 1985; Lebaron & Jones 2011; Ticca 2012; Broth & Mondada 2013).

Service encounters and interactions in a series

The overall structural organization of social encounters has mostly been studied in the CA literature referring to institutional interactions—such as medical consultations (Robinson 2003) and emergency calls (Zimmermann 1992). Service encounters also present an overall organization including the opening, request sequences (along with other possible actions such as customers' requesting for information/recommendation and seller's offering, explaining, and recommending), paying, and finally leave-taking (Carranza 2017; Mondada 2021). Studies of openings (Mortensen & Hazel 2014; Harjunpää, Mondada, & Svinhufvud 2018) and closings (Aston 1995; De Stefani 2006; Ticca 2012) of service encounters have shown the complexity of the multimodal resources involved, the relevance of mobility, and the importance of the material surroundings.

Service encounters are a perspicuous setting (Garfinkel 2002) for an inquiry on the *integrity* versus *porosity* of social interaction: when there is more than one customer waiting for the service, encounters are organized in *series*, with the seller serving one customer after another, and other customers witnessing, overhearing, and overseeing the course of the encounter. Consequently, the waiting customer often produces an endogenous analysis of its overall structural organization and is able to anticipate its closing. Likewise, the current customer and the seller see the waiting customer doing so and might orient to that. In this setting, the overall organization is of practical concern for all parties. Thus, commercial settings reveal how participants orient and practically manage the integrity of an interaction as a unit or engage in actions that treat interaction as porous—that is, as possibly impinging upon each other.

Interactions-in-a-series make relevant specific modes of organization across encounters, which are still under-studied in CA. The idea of

'conversations-in-a-series' was introduced by Schegloff (1980:106) to describe how callers participating in a radio program constituted by series of calls from the public organize their calls by orienting to this series. The fact that the calls are broadcast makes them accessible for imminent next callers. This situation is similar to the one studied here, which is characterized by a series that (a) is built on immediately successive interactions, which (b) involve one party but not all the persons around, (c) with the other persons overhearing and orienting to the series in fieri. Likewise, workplace studies have examined series of phone calls in call centers, seen from the perspective of the call taker (Whalen, Whalen, & Henderson 2002; Mondada 2008).

Other series of conversations, by contrast, involve the same co-participants across calls. Sacks (1992:166, 193) reflects about the historicity of relationships, established and made accountable through series of calls or visits with participants orienting to the (long/short) time since they have (not) talked together and to relevant updates. More locally, a call relates and projects a possible next one when making arrangements and promising to call back (Button 1991; Beach & Lockwood 2003). While these calls do not immediately follow each other, this is the case for series of mobile phone calls to specify a meeting arrangement or its location (Szymanski, Vinkhuyzen, Aoki, & Woodruff 2006; Laursen & Szysmanski 2013). Studies of series of calls can be seen as contributing to more recent discussions about longitudinal studies of interactions (Deppermann & Pekarek-Doehler 2021); however, the latter generally regard series of interactions that do not immediately follow each other but rather characterize a recurrent activity between the same co-participants across longer periods of time (e.g. medical visits, theater rehearsals, language lessons, etc.).

The interactions-in-a-series studied here are co-situated and face-to-face, one emerging and unfolding immediately after the other. Consequently, the series is overseen, witnessed, and even monitored, which results in a double orientation of the participants toward the integrity of each single interaction and toward the possible porosity between successive interactions in the series. This double orientation is revealed by the way participants manage the transition between the closing of the previous and the opening of the next encounter-in-the-series.

Data

Data from a variety of video recordings of service encounters are used to describe face-to-face interactions-in-a-series. These data were collected in Switzerland and France, in diverse languages (Italian, French, Swiss-German, and English), and different types of commercial exchanges (at the ticket counter of the Geneva train station; kiosks in Lugano, Alsace, and Lyon; and market stalls in Alsace and Basel) and historical situations (e.g. a kiosk in the 1980s in France, a market in Basel during Covid-19). All data have been recorded with the informed consent of the participants. For the present study, only encounters immediately following each other have been considered.

Analysis

This study deals with *encounters-in-a-series*, in which a seller serves customers who are waiting, and moves without any time out from one transaction to the next. The analyses focus on occurrences of openings initiated before the current encounter

has been properly closed; they are organized along a cline going from cases in which clear-cut boundaries are preserved between one encounter and the next, to unproblematic transitions presenting some micro-porosities between encounters, to cases in which attempts to open the next while the previous is not yet closed are treated as deviant, and cases in which the next encounter is opened as the previous is clearly still ongoing. The analyses highlight the multimodal details of closings and openings, the participants' orientations toward these details, and their normative consequences.

Preserving the integrity of the encounter

In some circumstances, participants explicitly seek to preserve the integrity of the encounter. This can manifest in evocations of the privacy of each encounter, which can be implemented by drawing lines on the floor in front of a counter or organizing queuing with numbers as ways of keeping the next customer in the queue at some distance, thus preserving the boundaries between one encounter and the next. In this section, we focus on the interactional organization of the closings of service encounters and how the transition to the next opening contributes to create clear-cut boundaries between exchanges and preserve the integrity of each encounter.

Extract (1) is from a counter selling tickets at a train station. Customers queue in front of parallel counters and are served as soon as one becomes free. We join the scene as two customers (CUS1, CUS2) have received their tickets; CUS1 initiates the final greetings and thanks (line 1), responded to in overlap by the seller (SEL), who then turns to the next new customer (NCU). In all of the extracts, the gray marking indicates the opening of the next encounter. The language of the encounter is indicated in its title (here: French).[1]

(1) (CollectionSBB_2.39) (French)

```
1 CUS1:    au r'voir [merci
           'goodbye  thanks'
2 SEL:            [au r'voir + %mer√ci± mesdames
                   'goodbye     thanks   madams'
   cus1:    >>LH  holds ticket---->>
   cus2:    >>puts ticket in purse------√
   cus2:                    +withdraws from counter->
   cus1:                           ±turns away->
   ncu:                 %looks at CUS1/2->
3           (0.3) + (0.1) ± (0.7)
   cus1:      ->+walks away---->>
   cus2:             -->±walks away->>
4 SEL :    •bon%#jour£:
              'hello'
   sel:     •looks up at NCU --->
   ncu:     -->%looks at SEL --->>
   mcu:              £walks twd counter->
   fig:         #Fig. 1
```

```
5              (0.4)
6 NCU :    est-ce que j'peux renouveler *ma£ carte euh
           'can I renew my card ehm'
   mcu:                                  -->£stops
   sel:                                  *extends LH--->>
```


The two customers begin to withdraw from the counter during the sequence of farewells (lines 1–2). Their move is witnessed and monitored by the next customer waiting in the queue. They walk away, and it takes a little time (line 3) for them to leave the counter. When the counter is partially free, the seller looks up to the next customer, vigorously, with a head toss. The new customer shifts her gaze to him immediately after as he produces the first syllable of a greeting (line 4, Figure 1), and then she walks to the counter. Both parties actively orient to the closing of the previous encounter and time their mutual engagement for the opening of the next one. The new customer initiates her request as she is still stepping toward the counter, treating 'bonjour:' as a go ahead rather than a greeting to be reciprocated (line 6). The seller promptly aligns with that.

The clear-cut separation between encounters can be enhanced by the material design of the counter and the queuing zone—in the previous extract, an architecturally linearized queue. Another circumstance in which the organization of the queue supported clearly delimited encounters was the Covid-19 pandemic, in which distance between waiting customers was enhanced. However, the boundaries between encounters are not just a matter of spatial-material distance, but remain an interactional achievement, as shown in the case below, recorded in a market during Covid-19.

(2) (C19_BAK_MP3_4445) (Swiss-German)

```
1 SEL:      schön#es   woch£en#en$de
            'have a nice week-end'
   cus:      >>withdraws from counter$goes away-->>
   cus:      >>gazes at SEL--£gazes away--->>
   fig:            #Fig. 2         #Fig. 3
```

2 CUS: danke
           'thanks'
3 SEL: tschüs*s #
           'bye'
   sel: *turns twd queing customers-->
   fig: #Fig. 4

4   (1.0)
5 SEL: •kannst du•£ zu# mir•£ ko: •€
           'can you come to me'
           •raises arm•gest twd himself•,,,•
   ncu1:   £raises RH£walks to ctr->
   ncu2:   €walks-->
   fig: #Fig. 5

5

```
6          (1) # (3.5) • £€ (2.0)           •
   ncu1:              -->£stops at counter
   ncu2:              -->€stops at counter
   sel:               •disinfects hands•
   fig:        # Fig. 6
```


6

```
7  SEL:     guete morge
            'good morning'
```

The current exchange is coming to a close (lines 1–3). As the seller produces a farewell (line 1), the customer is withdrawing from the counter (Figure 2). He has looked away by the completion of the seller's turn (Figure 3) and, as he walks away, he thanks the seller (line 2). The seller completes the interaction with a farewell (line 3) while the customer is already a few steps away (Figure 4). At this point, the exchange is clearly over.

On the last sound of the final farewell, the seller turns his head (Figure 4) toward the next customers queuing on his left. It is not clear whether they can see this scarcely visible change in posture, but their waiting posture shows they are monitoring the customer visibly walking away. After one second (line 4), the seller makes a big gesture (Figure 5) while addressing them loudly (line 5) and inviting them to come to the counter. One of them (NCU1) immediately responds with a gesture toward the seller and moves on, followed by her companion (NCU2) (line 5). While

they come closer (Figure 6) the seller disinfects his hands and greets the customers as they stop at the counter (line 7).

Here, the next encounter begins when the previous is clearly closed (although, if we consider the seller's head orientation, it is initiated precisely on the last sound of the last final farewell). In this spatial configuration, in which the queue is some steps away from the counter, and within an interactional organization in which customers wait for the seller to invite them to come in, the previous and subsequent encounters are clearly temporally distinct. This form of distributed ecology and linear sequential organization, which maximizes the strict succession of events, was particularly suited to the management of institutional encounters during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on minimizing the proximity between customers. However, in other circumstances, serial encounters are often organized with a more sustained pace between one encounter and the next, as is observable in the next section.

Micro-porosities

In queues facing the counter, the seller, the current customer, and the next customer contribute to smooth and quick transitions built on their respective monitoring (overseeing, overhearing) of the closings, which are exploited to organize the next openings. The transition to the next encounter is often initiated by the seller but might also be initiated by the customer. What counts as an initiation can be very subtle, most often a gaze-shift transforming the participation framework. When this is done can also be subtle, as the previous closing is almost complete. All of this raises the question of what exactly constitutes closing for the participants.

The transition can be initiated while the seller is still engaged (manually) in an action related to the just completed encounter. In extract (3), this concerns the closing of the till (a clearly visible and often audible event). Various customers are queuing behind the current customer buying a soda. When the seller announces the price, the customer gives the exact amount of cash (lines 1–2).

(3) (KIO_LUG_01.00.18—CUS40-CUS41) (Italian)

```
1 SEL:      tre e cinquanta gra+zie
            'three fifty      thanks'
   cus:                     +gives exact change-->
2           (0.5) +*
   cus:       -->+
   sel:           *takes money
3 SEL:      voilà
            'here they are'
4 CUS:      gra+zie mil[le+]
            'thousand thanks'
5 SEL:           [per]fet[to, ciao.    ] grazie#
                     'perfect  bye  thanks'
6 CUS:               [buona giornata]
                         'have a good day'
   cus:      +takes prod+pivots and goes away-->>
   fig:                              fig. 7#
```

7

```
7              (0.4) £*   (0.7)   * (0.3)  £$   (0.3)*   (1.5) #     $
   sel:             *opens till*             *puts money in till-->
   ncu:        £looks CUS leaving£looks at products-->
   ncu:                       $2 steps twd counter$
   fig:                                      #fig. 8
```


8

```
8  SEL:      •ci*£[ao  ]#
                  'hi'
9  NCU:          [ciao]#
                  'hi'
   sel:      •looks up at NCU-->
   ncu:       ->£looks up at SEL-->
   sel:      -->*closes till-->
   fig:               #fig. 9
```

```
10          (0.2) * (0.4)
   sel:        ->*
11 NCU:     vengo a   prendere% le sigarette per favore%
            'I come to pick up   the cigarettes please'
   ncu:     >>holds bill in LH%puts bill on the counter%
```

The seller completes the encounter with the previous customer with farewells (lines 4–6). The customer walking away is monitored by the next customer (line 7, Figure 7), who steps toward the counter when the way is free. She also looks at the products on the counter in a way that observably does not yet engage with the seller, who is busy putting the money in the till (Figure 8).

The next encounter is opened when the seller looks up, and responsively the customer looks at her, while they both engage in greetings (lines 8–9). Reciprocity is established at that point. During the opening greetings, the seller closes the till—achieving the visible final closing of the previous encounter lines (8–9, Figure 9). The customer issues her greeting before the seller closes the till but requests the cigarettes only after the seller has closed it, after a perceivable gap, thereby orienting to the seller being now fully available for the next transaction.

This case shows that transitions to the next encounter orient to the previous customer as already gone; they do not compete with previous customers' actions, but rather with some conclusive action regarding the seller's work (e.g. arranging the coins in the till). The fact that it is the seller who shifts her gaze toward the new customer gives some legitimacy to the next opening. This case raises the question of what constitutes the (completion of the) closing, as well as who is concerned at that moment by the ongoing closing, within differentiated perspectives of the (previous) customer versus the seller.

These issues are also observable in the next case, from a kiosk in France in the 1980s, albeit with a focus on when the customer is finished. The customer has paid by putting some money on the counter and the seller calculates the change aloud (line 1) while placing some coins on the counter (line 1), before she takes his money and puts it in a drawer. The customer thanks (line 2) and takes some time to collect the coins (line 3).

(4) (KIO_TAB_1.58.00) (French)

```
1 SEL:      et tre[nte              *
            'and thirty'
            >>puts change on c*takes CUS's money-->
2 CUS:          [mer::ci*
                'thanks'
   sel:             ->*closes drawer-->
3          +(0.2) • (0.2)#* (0.3) # £ (0.4) + (0.5)±
   cus:    +takes one coin----------------+takes second coin-->
   cus:                                   ±turns away-->
   sel:          •looks at NCU->>
   sel:           ->*bents twd NCU->>
   ncu:                      £steps fwd->
   fig:           #fig. 10 #fig. 11
```



```
4 NCU:      vous avez* plus de±maxi+ pos£ters# de AA?
            'you (don't) have anymore any poster of AA'
   sel:           ->*
   cus:                        -->+
   cus:                    ->±walks away->>
   ncu:                          ->£stops at counter
   fig:                          #fig. 12
```

While the current customer is picking up the coins from the counter, the seller turns to the next customer: she looks at her as she is closing the drawer (line 3, Figure 10); she bends toward her while the customer is taking the last coins. The new customer responds by stepping toward the counter, where the current/previous customer is still collecting his money, although he has already turned his head away (Figure 11). The new customer's request is placed well before the current/previous customer has finished taking all his money (Figure 12).

In this case, the seller treats the action of picking up the change as concerning the person and not the encounter anymore; she initiates the next exchange at that point. The next exchange is opened with a reorientation of her body toward the next customer, in the absence of greetings; the fact that the customer immediately utters her request might display an orientation to some urgency. This case also raises the issue of the relevance of categories such as 'current' and 'next': is CUS the 'current customer' or already the 'previous' one when the seller initiates the new encounter and NCU, the 'new' customer, now 'current', is uttering her request?

In the next cases, the transition is initiated during the final word of the closing sequence (extract (5)) or during the exchange of farewells (extract (6)). In extract (5), at the train station, the seller prints and hands over the tickets (line 1) and utters farewells (line 2), which are responded to in overlap by the customer (line 3, Figure 13).

(5) (SBB_Collection_1.00) (French/English)

```
1 SEL:     voilà chère *madame*
           'here it is dear madam'
                       *puts ticket on counter*
2          bon +week-[end •au r#'voir +mer£ci£• merci
           'have a nice week-end  bye      thanks thanks'
3 CUS:              [mer:ci à #vous aussi et bon courage
                     'thank    you too     and good lućk
   sel:                      •looks CUS------------•away-->
   cus:           +takes ticket------------+takes bag-->
   ncu:     >>looks dwn docs in her hands---£up£down-->
   fig:                        #fig. 13
```


13

```
4               (0.3)
5  SEL:       mer£:+c•i:
               'thanks'
   cus:           ->+leaves-->>
   ncu:        -->£looks up at SEL-->>
   sel:            -->•looks at NCU-->>
6               (0.3) % (0.3)
   ncu:            %begins to move-->
7  SEL:       bon$jour# %madame$
               'hello        madam'
   ncu:            $smiles-----------$
   ncu:               ->%walks to counter-->
   fig:               #fig. 14
```


14

```
8               (0.2)
9  NCU:       hi
10              (0.3)
11 SEL:       hello
12 NCU:       one% ticket to interlaken
   ncu:        -->%stops
```

The final sequences are overheard by the next customer, who is looking down at the documents she is holding in both hands (Figure 13). She seems to orient to the final character of the farewells (as the seller is saying thank you, a turn that can be understood even by a non-francophone): she quickly raises her eyes to the seller (line 3), then looks down again. The current customer is leaving as the seller repeats his thanks (line 5). The next customer looks up, continuously gazing at the seller, who looks up just a tenth of a second after. Both orient to that precise moment as an opportunity for transitioning to the next encounter by establishing mutual gaze. Immediately, the next customer begins to move (line 6, Figure 14). Greeted by

the seller (line 7), she smiles and walks to the counter in response. She then produces a greeting in English (line 9), occasioning a third greeting in the same language (Heller 1978; Mondada 2018). She utters her request as she stops near the counter. In this case, the gaze shift is initiated by the new customer, in the middle of the final word *mer•ci* 'thanks' (line 5). At that point, the other customer is leaving. So, closing words can be said as the leaving customer has already bodily withdrawn from the exchange. The new customer might orient to that, rather than to the verbal closing.

Likewise, in the next extract, the transition is also performed during the farewells. At a kiosk, two different customers, queuing one after the other, come to the counter to redeem a lottery coupon. The seller announces to the first the coupon's winning amount (line 1) and then gives her the money.

(6) (KIO_LUG_1.03.20—CLI43-CLI44) (Italian)

```
1  SEL:      cinque fran*chi
              'five francs'
   sel:       >>examines*and processes coupon->
   ncu:       >>waits beside/behind CUS->
2  CUS:      se mi dà i soldi perché non è per me.
              'if you give me the money cause it's not for me'
3            (9.4) *           (1.6)             *
   sel:        -->*RH puts 5fr on counter*,,,,-->
4  CUS:      grazie #mil*le¥*£
              'thousand thanks'
   cus:                   ¥takes 5fr->
   sel:             -->*closes till*
   ncu:                    ->£lateral step->
   fig:            #fig. 15
```

```
5 SEL:      arrive[¥der*ci   ].    £
              'goodbye'
6 CUS:            [arri*vede%#rci]£
                      'goodbye'
   cus:        ->¥
   cus:                    %pivots-->
   sel:            -->*extends Lhand-->
   ncu:                  -->£extends hand w coupon-->
   fig:                  #fig. 16
```


16   17

```
7          (0.3)#
   fig:        #fig. 17
8 SEL:      buon*gior%no
              'hello'
   sel:      ->*takes coupon and moves to till->
   cus:        ->%leaves->>
9 NCU:      buongiorno
              'hello'
```

The current customer thanks the seller for the money she receives (line 4) and as she extends her hand toward the coin, the next waiting customer does a lateral step, projecting the imminent opening of the next encounter. The current one is not yet closed, but during the final farewells (lines 5–6), as the current customer is about to take the coin, the seller extends her hand toward the new customer (Figure 15), who, in response, hands over his lottery coupon (Figures 16–17). The first customer turns away, arranging her bag while responding to the closing farewell (line 6), and she definitively walks away during the first opening greeting (line 8). When the seller greets the new customer (line 8), the coupon transfer is almost complete.

So, in this case, even more than in the previous extract, the seller initiates the transaction by extending her hand toward the coupon she spotted in the hands of the next customer, concomitantly with the final greetings, two syllables before the current customer has withdrawn. In this case, the initial customer is still in front of the counter and still engaged in the retrieval of her coins (cf.

extract (4)), at a moment in which the seller's contribution to the transaction is finished.

   Likewise, in the next extract, also at a kiosk, the seller initiates the next encounter as the initial customer is retrieving her coins. She has picked up a lighter worth 3.25Fr and paid with a 50Fr bill. We join the action as the seller gives the change.

(7) (KIO_LUG_01.29.59—CLI61-CLI62) (Italian)

```
1 SEL:      qua*ranta sei e setta*n•ta+#cinque£
            'forty six and seventy-five'
                 *change on cntr*
                                •looks at CUS-->
   cus:                          +picks up change-->>
   ncu:                               £lks from back-->>
   fig:                         #fig. 18A/B
2           (0.3)
```


18

19

```
3 CUS:      gra[zie]
            'thanks'
4 SEL:        [•arri]•#vederci=
                'goodbye'
   sel:      -->•......•looks/bents laterally to NCU->
   fig:             #fig. 19A/B
5 CUS:      =arrive+de[rci]
                'goodbye'
                 -->+
6 NCU:                    [°un] camel #box per favo•re°
                          'a camel   box please'
   sel:                                     ->•turns to cig-->>
   fig:                     #fig. 20
```

20

While the final farewells are exchanged (lines 3–4), the seller, who was looking at the current customer (Figure 18AB), bends laterally and looks at the next one (Figure 19AB, in the middle of *arri•vederci* in line 4, which is then reciprocated in line 5, who was looking at her from behind the current one (Figure 19B). Responding to her gaze shifting onto him, the new customer immediately initiates his request, which overlaps with the leaving customer's farewell (line 6, Figure 20).

These micro-porosities in the encounters, the next impinging on the previous as the previous is not yet closed, raise the issue of when is the encounter closed according to the participants (after the final greetings? when the customer is moving away? when the seller has finished arranging the money related to the previous exchange? when the customer is retrieving their change?), and in whose perspective (customer vs. seller). The participants seem to orient to the completion of their reciprocal orientations and engagements, rather than to the ending of the activities related to the transaction. They seem to treat some actions (arranging the till, retrieving the change) as 'personal' and not as belonging to the interactional closing. Indeed, in all of these cases, the participants do not treat these micro-porosities between one encounter and the other as problematic.

Problematic cases

Participants often do not treat the porosity between encounters as problematic. However, in some cases they do. In this section, I discuss two such instances. It might be relevant that they are both initiated by the next customer and are treated as deviant by the seller. This confirms the asymmetry between the parties in their rights and obligations to open the transaction, with the seller—rather than the customer—having the legitimacy to do so.

We join the next case as the seller is giving the change (lines 1–3). The next customer quickly approaches the counter, and stops beside the current customer, immediately looking at him (Figure 21).

(8) (KIO_LUG_01.23.32—Cli56 -57) (Italian)

```
1 SEL:     cinquanta,+± (0.8) e# venti±+set[tanta ]
           'fifty                and twenty seventy'
2 CUS:                                      [grazie]
                                            'thanks'
   ncu:    >>quickly appr ctr+stops laterally+
   ncu:            ±looks at CUS±
   fig:                      #fig. 21
```



```
3 SEL:     e ora le do *due
           'and now I give you two'
                     *gives change->
4 CUS:     gra*%zi [e &arrivede%rci. & (buona conti-)]
           'thanks      goodbye     (have a good ti-)'
5 SEL:              [perfetto.   % la rin*£gra*•zio,] [arrive#]derci
           'perfect      I thank you        goodbye'
6 NCU:                                         [due] #
                                               'two'
   cus:         %takes 2francs-%
   cus:                &pivots---------&bents twd his belongings->
   sel:       -->*,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,*closes till*
   ncu:                             £RH extends w bill->
   sel:                                  •lks NCU->
   fig:                                       #fig. 22
```

22

```
7             american spirit £aran•* cioni
              'orange american spirit'
   ncu:                       ->£puts money on the counter
   sel:               ->•
   sel:                     *walks away to fetch prod->
8 SEL:        buongi#orno
              'hello'
9 NCU:        °buongiorno°&
              'hello'
   cus:              ->&leaves->>
   fig:        #fig. 23
```


23

The current customer and the seller engage in a closing sequence (lines 4–5), in which the seller offers a positive assessment, appreciating the kind contribution of the customer giving exact change, and then responds to his thanking and farewell.

In overlap with her response, the new customer initiates a request, first by extending a bill and then by uttering *due* 'two' (line 6, Figure 22). The request is continued in the clear (line 7), targeting some cigarettes: the new customer puts

the bill on the counter, while the other customer leaves. The seller responds imme-
diately to the request, by walking towards the cigarettes. However, while stepping
away, without gazing at the new customer (Figure 23), she utters a greeting (line 8),
reciprocated by him with a lower voice line (9).

The seller's greeting is late: it is uttered after the customer's request and after
the seller has begun to move towards the requested product. Moreover, it is uttered
when the two parties are not reciprocally oriented to each other, engaged in dif-
ferent actions (she fetches the product, he looks at his wallet). This position of the
seller's *buongiorno* makes it something else than an opening greeting (and the lower
voice of the customer's second pair part treats it that way): a repair of some missing
greetings before, or even a reproach or a reprimand, addressing the (too) quick ini-
tiation of the encounter. By this late positioning of the greetings the seller indicates
the early request as impinging on the previous encounter, normatively treating the
porosity of the second encounter as problematic.

In other cases, the seller is even more explicit in her normative treatment of an
early new customer's request produced as the previous encounter is still ongoing.

(9) (KIO_F_VIL_090415_01.07.01/CLI29 -30) (French)

```
1  SEL:     donc onze euros cinquante* s'il vous plait
            'so eleven euros fifty please'
   sel:                                    *gives magazine-->
2           (1.3)
3  CUS:     me*r[ci
            'thanks'
4  SEL:         [merci::*+
                'thanks'
   sel:     -->*helps putting mag in CUS'bag*
   cus:                 +leans over his bag-->
5           (1) £ (0. 3)# (3)
   ncu:         £looks at SEL on L->
   fig:              #fig. 24
6  NCU:     bonjou£::r
            'hello'
   ncu:          ->£looks bending on his R->
7  SEL:     bonjour
            'hello'
8  NCU:     un•::# wins[ton s:i-
            'a      winston plea:'
9  SEL:  →           [oui j' finis juste• avec [le monsieur,
                     'yes I just finish with [mister'
10 NCU:                           [°ah£ d'accord°
                                  'oh alright'
   ncu:                                ->£
   sel:          •looks at NCU ------------•
   fig:             #fig. 25
```

11   (1.2)
12 CUS: °dix [(.) on:ze°
          '°ten (.) eleven°'
13 NCU: →   [j'ai cru qu' vous aviez fini
              'I thought you were done'
14   (1.4)
15 SEL: merci:
          'thanks'
16   (1.6)
17 CUS: [au r'voir
          'goodbye'
18 SEL: [au r'voir
          'goodbye'
19 SEL: au r'voir merci
          'goodbye thanks'
20   (.)
21 SEL: en vingt? le winston?
          'a twenty(box)? the winston?'
22 NCU: euh: oui
          'ehm yes'
23 SEL: six cinquante s'il vous plait (.) merci
          'six fifty   please   thanks'

The seller announces the price and helps the customer to put the purchased mag-
azines in his bag (lines 1–4). The customer takes some time taking out his wallet. The
next customer is waiting behind him; after a lapse (line 5) he visibly leans to his left
(Figure 24) then to his right (Figure 25) while greeting the seller who is hidden, from
his perspective, by some postcards. The posture and the lengthened greeting (line 6)
pursues a response, and indeed the seller reciprocates the greeting and establishes
mutual gaze with the new customer (Figure 25). However, whereas the new customer
produces a request immediately after the completion of the greeting sequence, the
seller formulates what she is doing, in a way that could be heard as a complaint (line
9), making the request illegitimate. The customer aligns immediately: his change-
of-token (Heritage 1984) *ah* 'oh' shows that he now realizes what the seller is doing;
moreover, as the current customer engages in the audible counting of his money
(line 12), the new customer produces a retrospective account, addressed to the seller

(line 13), which topicalizes his misunderstanding as concerning the closing of the current encounter. Consequently, the initial encounter continues (lines 14–19) with the customer paying and leaving. As soon as the encounter is closed, the seller resumes (line 21) the previous request sequence, with a turn tying back to it, as an inserted question, specifying the product, before fetching it.

In this case, the seller normatively treats the initiation of the next encounter by the customer as violating the rights and obligations of various parties. This leads the new customer to re-interpret the action of the current customer that was not visible for him: preparing to pay (rather than, e.g., rearranging his belongings). Ascribing the former gives the initial customer the right to continue the encounter, while ascribing the latter gives the new customer the right to initiate the next one. So, all of the parties in this deviant case orient to the integrity of the exchange as having been violated and the porosity between encounters as normatively problematic.

Opening up the next before the previous is complete and closing after the new opening

In *Micro-porosities* above, I discussed several cases in which the initiation of the opening of a new encounter was the result of the projectability of the closing and was initiated 'early' by reference to the ongoing previous closing. *Problematic cases* above showed that this can be treated as deviant by the participants. In this section, I present some cases in which the opening is initiated even 'earlier'—that is, while the current transaction is still clearly ongoing. Moreover, the current transaction will be closed later, as the new one progresses. These early openings are all initiated by the seller, in a way that displays some entitlement to do so. These cases demonstrate the porosity between encounters; they also highlight the specific environments in which encounters can be legitimately initiated. Finally, they reveal how these behaviors can be treated as more or less delicate, or problematic, by the parties.

Minimal troubles. When, after paying, the customer takes some time to rearrange their belongings and put the purchased items in their bag, while still occupying the center of the counter, the other parties—the seller as well as the next waiting customer—can treat this moment as legitimately relevant for opening the next exchange. In the cases examined in this section, the final greetings that the previous exchange are produced later, in the midst of the new transaction. As we see below, this is generally unproblematic, although some minimal trouble might be displayed by one of the parties.

The time spent in rearranging belongings toward the end of the transaction can be unproblematically treated as an opportunity to initiate and even terminate a new transaction, as in the following fragment, from a kiosk in France in the 1980s.

(10) (KIO_TOB_39.25) (French)

1 SEL: dix neuf vingt
                  'nineteen twenty'

```
2           +(7.2)+ *(3.9)
   cus:     +places coins on c+
   sel:             *gives back coins-->
3 CUS:      merci*
            'thanks'
   sel:        ->*brings CUS's coins in drawer-->
4 SEL:      merci.
            'thanks'
5           +(3.4)
   cus:     +bents down to his belongings-->
6 SEL:      ((coughs))•#
                     •looks at NCU->
   fig:              #fig. 26
```


26

```
7       → (0.4) £      (1.1)     £   (0.3)
   ncu:  →       £shows newsp£points-->
8 NCU:  → <plus::s un paquet> d'gauloi+s£es
             'and    a package. of Gauloises'
                                      ->£
   cus:                        ->+takes purchase-->
9          *(0.4)
   sel:    *turns to shelf-->
10 SEL:    sans filtre?+
           'without filter'
   cus:            ->+takes coins-->
11         (0.3)*(0.2) *
   sel:      ->*takes package and shows*puts on counter-->
```

```
12 SEL:      comme ça?+ ≥
             'like this'
   cus:               ->+
   cus:                  ≥ bends down on his belongings-->
13           (0.8) * (1)
   sel:       -->*
14 SEL:      alors cinq. HUIT trente, jeune homme
             'so    five  eight.  thirty  young man'
15           (0.7)≥
   cus:       -->≥ walks away-->>
16 CUS:      allez$ au [r`voir    ]
             'let's go.   bye'
17 SEL:              [au revoir]
                      'bye'
   ncu:              $steps closer to central counter
18 NCU:      (sept?)$
             '(seven?)'
                 ->$
19 SEL:      HUIT , (.) FRANCS,$ (.)   TRENTE.
             'eight     francs           thirty'
   ncu:                    ->$
```

As payment is completed (lines 1–4), the customer leans over his belongings. Their reorganization takes some time, and the seller turns to the next customer (line 6, Figure 26), shifting gaze toward him. The new customer responds with a request, silently showing a newspaper (line 7) and adding another product verbally (line 8). The seller grants the latter request by turning toward the shelf where the cigarettes are and inserts two questions (lines 10, 12) before definitively fetching the product. During this time, the initial customer takes the products bought and the change, leaning again on his belongings. When the seller announces the price to the new customer, the previous one walks away, while uttering a farewell, promptly responded to by the seller (lines 16–17). The new customer steps closer to face the seller and initiates a repair of the price (line 18), which is repaired by the seller (line 19).

In this case, the fact that a transaction is initiated and continued while the initial customer rearranges his personal belongings is not treated as a problem. The initiation of the new transaction is occasioned by the seller's gaze moving to the new customer, who treats this as a go ahead. This enables the seller to move the new transaction forward. Before leaving, the previous customer initiates a final greeting sequence.

Although the transition to the next encounter as the current is not yet properly closed is unproblematic in the previous extract, in other cases the initiation of the opening of another interaction generates small troubles, which reveal that despite initiating another course of action, the participants are still oriented toward the relevance of the closing. This is the case of the following fragment at a market stall. The seller gives change to the current customer (lines 1–3) who engages in arranging her wallet in her bag (line 4). A lapse emerges and the seller looks at the next customer, waiting in line.

(11) (MARKET_vegan_1.55.08 -1.55.21— CUS26-27) (English/French)

```
1 SEL:      and four back for [you
2 CUS:                      [thank you::
  ncu:      >>stands beside CUS-->>
3 SEL:      =thank you:
4           +(0.5) • (0.2)
  cus:      +arranges purse->
  sel:            •lks NCU->
5 NCU:      salu::t=
            'hi'
6 SEL:      =sal•ut
            'hi'
             ->•lks down/CUS-->
7 NCU:      ça va?
            'how are you'
8           (0.3) +   (0.3)      + (0.2)±(0.2)+
  cus:            ->+closes purse+          +takes product-->
  ncu:                              ±lks up at SEL-->
9 CUS:      tha[nk you

10 SEL:         [thank± +you::
   cus:               ->±
   cus:                ->+leaves-->>
11          (1.0) • ( 0.4)
   sel:         ->•looks at NCU->
12 NCU:     [ça va:?
            'how are you'
13 SEL:     [ça va oui et toi?
            'fine     yes and you'
```

As the seller looks at the next customer, the latter initiates a greeting sequence (lines 5–6). The seller reciprocates but turns her gaze back to the initial customer. As the new one initiates a how-are-you-sequence, displaying some familiarity with the seller, she does not immediately respond (line 8). In the emerging gap (line 8), she looks at the current customer and can see that she has finished arranging her wallet and grasping her purchase. The seller thus sees the customer's arrangements and can project their completion. Indeed, the customer looks up at the seller and initiates a thanking sequence (lines 9–10), then leaves. So, the gap in line 8 is produced by the seller opting to wait until the customer is finished and to close the previous encounter, rather than continuing the new encounter just initiated (lines 5–6). Both the new customer and the seller are oriented toward the suspension of the how-are-you-sequence: the customer by re-doing it (line 12) and the seller, in overlap, by responding to it (line 13). Although they align in initiating the opening of the new encounter, the seller orients to the relevance of first closing the previous.

In the next fragment, at the same market stand, a transaction is coming to an end with the customer paying:

(12) (MARKET_vegan_1.38.40 -1.39.30—CUS22-23) (French)

```
1  SEL:    tsk (0.2) et voilà. =   *
                    'and here it is'
                 >>gives change back*
   ncu:     >>stands aside-->
2  CUS:    +=merc[i:
             'thanks'
          +puts change in wallet-->
3  SEL:            [>c'est moi,<
                    'it's me'
4         •   (2.0)  •   (0.5)  •(0.5)• (0.9)
          •lks down•lks NCU•CUS •NCU-->
5  NCU:    bonjour
             'hello'
6  SEL:    bonjour#
             'hello'
   fig:             #fig. 27
```


27

```
7  NCU:    j'vais prendre deux+ samosas et un rouleau d'printemps
             'I will take two samosas and one spring roll'
                        ->+puts wallet and products in bag->
8  SEL:    oui
             'yes'
```

((Seven lines omitted, choice of the types of samosas and rolls))

```
15 NCU:    d+eux ±et deux.    +
             'two and two'
   cus:    ->+grasps her drink+
   cus:           ±turns away-->
```

```
16            (1.3)
17 CUS:       au± r'voir±#
              'bye'
              ->±lks back to SEL±walks away->>
   fig:                    #fig. 28
```



```
18 SEL:       au r'v$oir, mer£ci#
              'bye          thanks'
   ncu:                $moves to the center of the counter->
   ncu:                     £LH takes dates  sample to taste->>
   fig:                     #fig. 29
```

19 NCU:	et je goûte$
	'and I taste'
	-->$
20 SEL:	allez y
	'please'

The next customer is standing aside, waiting. As the seller gives change to the current customer (line 1) who says thanks (line 2), and is reciprocated (line 3), a lapse emerges. The customer is arranging her money in her wallet. The seller lowers her gaze and looks alternatively at the current and at the next customer (line 4). Finally, when she looks at the next customer, he initiates a greeting sequence (lines 5–6, Figure 27) and a request (line 7). The request is promptly granted by the seller, who engages in offering various options concerning the products mentioned (lines omitted). The seller here aligns promptly to both sequences initiated by the next customer. However, the fact that her gaze oscillates between the two customers without saying anything (line 4) indicates a hesitation between waiting for the current customer to be finished and initiating an encounter with the next customer.

The first customer takes some time to put her wallet, then her products, in the bag. At some point she grasps a drink she has bought at the stall, and pivots away, projecting leaving (line 15). However, after a step, she turns back her head, quickly looking at the seller while uttering her farewells (line 17, Figure 28) and then walks away as the seller responds (line 18). The new customer promptly moves to the center of the stall (Figure 29). The fact that the initial customer initiates a final greeting sequence, turning back while doing so, displays an orientation to the encounter as not yet closed or as closable at that point. This produces a late closing, which might indicate some trouble or delicacy. However, this is not oriented to by the other parties: the new customer moves to the center of the stall and the seller continues to serve him.

In the cases studied in this section, the departing customer initiates the farewell sequence, contrary to the cases studied in *Micro-porosities*. These farewells are addressed to the seller (vs. the new customer). Moreover, while in the former the seller is unproblematically opening the next encounter, in the latter they look at the new customer, initiating mutual gaze, and aligning with the opening, although hesitating to progress to the new encounter.

Contingencies making early opening problematic. The seller can initiate the next encounter as the previous is not yet completed as a way to enhance participation and minimize the waiting time for queuing customers. This might not only raise normative issues, but might also run into practical problems, as we see in this section. At a market stand, the seller routinely organizes the opening of the next encounter when the current customer is paying with a credit card: by doing so, he treats the moment at which the customer manipulates the credit card machine, inserting his pin, as taking time, without involving him; more generally, he treats paying as closing the transaction. But practical contingencies can arise at this point, either related to the credit card or to other possible issues. In these cases, the seller engages in multi-activity (Haddington, Keisanen, Mondada, & Nevile 2014) by serving two customers in parallel.

In the next fragment, the customer (CUS1), accompanied by his wife (CUS2), is paying by card. The next customer (NCU1), accompanied by a friend (NCU2), is selected after the current has been given the credit card reader, and engages in a search for which piece (*carreaux* 'squares') of chocolate he wants to buy.

(13) (CHOC 1.20.09 -1.21.20—cli24-cli26) (French)

```
1  SEL:      vingt-cinq cinquante s'il te plaît
             'twenty-five fifty      please'
             >>packing the purchase-->
2            (0.4)
3  CUS1:     par carte
             'by card'
4            (1.0)
5  SEL:      oui:
             'yes'
6            (8.9)
7  SEL:      merci beauc<oup*::[:•:::::*:::•(1.3)>
             'many thanks'
8  CUS1:                        [merci beaucoup
                                 'many thanks'
   sel:                     *takes card*
   sel:                     -->•gives bag•
9            *(11.5)
             *inserts c.card in reader and types price-->
10 SEL:      per*mettez jeune homme*
             'you allow      young man'
             ->*gives c.card reader to CUS1*
11           (0.3) • (0.4) #
   sel:           •looks at NCU->
   fig:               #fig. 30
```

12 SEL: → monsieur j'vous écoute
          'sir   I listen to you'
13   (0.3)
14 NCU1: bon ben alors (.) j'sais pas trop quoi choisir
          'well well then   I don't know what to choose'

((Twelve lines omitted, questions about options))

26 SEL: eh ben voilà (0.4) après tu peux choisir au carré
          'well right   then you can choose by square'
27   tu vois,* (.) comme ça voilà* t'es à trois cinquante
          'you see   like this right you reach three fifty'
                  puts square on balance
28   •sur le carré
          'for one square'
   sel: ->•turns to CUS->
29   +(0.6)
   cus1: +gives reader back->
30 SEL: et +*au- merci beaucoup jeune [homme* et au besoin,•
          'and by- thanks a lot   young man. and if you need'
   cus1: ->+
   sel: *takes c.c.reader back----------------*
   sel: -->•
31 NCU1:   [ouais j'comptais
                                       'yeah I wanted'
32   prend-(.) j'comptais prendre cent grammes euh::
          'to tak-   I wanted to take hundred grams ehm'
33   (0.6)
34 SEL: mais *t'es à soixante gramme sur le carr*eau
          'but you reach sixty grams with the square'
                gives credit card back to CUS1----
35 CUS1: me:r[ci
          'thanks'
36 NCU1:   [d'accord
              'alright'
37   (0.2)
38 SEL: merci bien belles [fêtes de fin d'an[née, merci&
          'thanks happy end of year celebrations   thanks'
39 CUS1:   [merci::
                             'thanks'
40 CUS2:   [merci à vous
                                             'thank you'
41 SEL: &pour votre [attention:: merci madame
          'for your attention.   thanks madam'
42 NCU2 :   [si t'en prends deux avec la remise
                       'if you take two with the discount'
43   ça t'fait:
          'you pay:'
44 NCU1 : ouais ouais deux carreaux: euh (.) mais lesquels?
          'yeah yeah two squares   ehm   but which ones'

Upon hearing the price (line 1), the customer announces he is paying by credit card (line 3) and hands over his card to the seller. The seller gives a bag with the purchase and takes the card (lines 7–8), occasioning a sequence of thanks related to the object transfer. The seller prepares the card reader and hands it over to the customer (lines 9–10). He then turns to the next customer (Figure 30), selecting him (line 12). The new customer displays his indecision in front of a wide choice of chocolates (line 14) and expresses he wants to buy only a small amount to be eaten on the road (omitted). The seller suggests one square, as a relevant unit, demonstratively putting a square on the balance and displaying the price, 3.5 euros (lines 26–28). At this moment, the previous customer has inserted his pin in the card reader and is ready to give it back: the seller looks at him and takes the machine (line 30). This is partially overlapped by the new customer coming to a decision, formulated in terms of weight (100 grams, lines 31–32). The seller rebuts him, inviting him to use the square unit instead (1 square is 60 grams, line 34), while he gives the credit card back to the initial customer (line 35). The seller engages in an extended closing sequence (lines 38–41) before turning back to the new customer.

In this case, the seller alternates between the end of the previous transaction and the initiation of a new one, managing two parties, one paying and the other one choosing a product. The engagement in two courses of action in which customers need some time to accomplish their actions enables the seller to skillfully give time to each party, while globally progressing his selling activities.

Discussion and conclusion

The paper has examined *encounters-in-a-series* in which a party (the seller) moves without any time out from one encounter to the next. The closing of the current and the opening of the next encounter reveal various forms of *porosity* between interactions. Encounters-in-a-series constitute a perspicuous setting to observe both the participants' orientation to the preservation of the autonomy and the integrity of single interactions and their possible engagement in an interaction while another one is still ongoing. The analyses have documented instances in which the participants (a) achieve the closing of an encounter before engaging in the next; (b) begin the next just before the current is closed, in cases of *micro-porosity*; and (c) begin the next well before the current is closed, occasioning normative and practical problems.

The porosity of serial encounters raises general questions about the overall sequential organization of social interaction as well as the definition and delimitation of openings and closings. In particular, when is an encounter closed? What are the relevant moments constituting closing? Are there verbal and embodied practices and actions that participants orient to as being more sequentially implicative/relevant/salient than others? The analyses showed that participants do closely monitor the progression of the closings. They do so not as disinterested bystanders, but as being next in the queue: their endogenous analysis is turned toward the progressivity, efficiency, and accessibility of the targeted service.

Participants are not equal in the management of the transition between current and next—which is the collective accomplishment of three parties: the seller, the current customer, and the new customer. The seller displays special rights to initiate the transition, often with a simple gaze shift from the current to the next customer,

understood by the latter as a go-ahead to progress the openings. When the customer takes the initiative, this might be accepted by the seller, aligned but delayed by them or reprimanded by them in deviant cases. Other customers might also orient to the normativity of these porous transitions. This raises questions about the categories of 'previous', 'current', and 'next'. In the course of the encounter(s), these categories might change; in the case of porous encounters, who was 'current' might become 'previous' and who was 'next' becomes 'current'. This not only concerns a dynamic local order, but can become a normative problem, possibly related to entitlements, legitimate priorities, and rights to progress and to be served, among other aspects.

The way participants not only monitor but also actively treat various practices as constituting closing shows that they do not consider all actions building closing as equally relevant. For instance, the porosity between encounters emerges in relation to paying and arranging personal belongings in particular. Paying is a complex action—involving giving cash or credit card, retrieving coins or the card, and so on—which is diversely attended to by the seller, who sometimes treats the retrieval of coins or the manipulation of credit cards as 'personal' actions rather than a mutual engagement. Likewise, once payment has been initiated and sequences of thanks are completed, some participants consider that the transaction is over. This makes relevant a distinction between the economic transaction (completed with the exchange of goods/money) and the social interaction (completed with the farewells) for all practical purposes, in a context in which subsequent customers are waiting and overseeing the current exchange and in which the progressivity of sales (vs. of sociality) might constitute a shared priority. In this context, farewells can be treated as post-posable (inserted later in the new transaction) and even as optional.

This in turn raises questions about which multimodal details participants do orient to in treating an action. For instance, some participants initiate the opening of the next encounter as the farewells are still being uttered. A closer look at these sequences shows that farewells are often uttered while withdrawing, pivoting, or walking away—that is, while already leaving the interactional space and therefore no longer mutually bodily oriented toward the seller. Some participants might treat this multimodal arrangement as enabling the initiation of the next opening. This raises interesting questions about how (and which) participants orient to and make sense of multimodal details, exploiting them as offering diverse opportunities to engage.

These considerations show that the blurred frontier between two encounters—their *porosity*—is not the result of sloppiness or urgency, but rather the product of careful monitoring and detailed consideration of actions in their multimodal specificities. Minimal as well as larger porosities between encounters enable us to reflect about the integrity and autonomy of social interactions in their overall organization and as single autonomous units. On the one hand, participants might orient to this integrity—for different purposes such as related to security, privacy, or sense of service—as normatively relevant and achieve it collectively by clearly differentiating between one encounter and the other. On the other hand, participants might also engage de facto in porous interactions that are less clear-cut by opening up a new interaction when the previous has not yet closed. They might also—and not always convergently—treat these porosities as normatively (un)problematic. The porosity of encounters-in-a-series thus reveals a local endogenous analysis of the

overall organization of the interaction, orienting to fundamental properties of social interactions as constituting single units, thus relativizing their autonomy and at the same time displaying when this becomes a normative issue.

Note

1. Transcription conventions: Talk has been transcribed following Jefferson's conventions (2004) and embodied conduct following Mondada's conventions (2024).

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